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STUDIES  
IN THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION



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PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

BY

GEORGE GALLOWAY, B.D.

FORMERLY EXAMINER IN PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY  
OF ST ANDREWS



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
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GENERAL

## P R E F A C E.

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THIS volume does not claim to be more than its title indicates. I have not attempted, *more Germanico*, to deal with the subject systematically. On the one hand, I doubt my own competency for the task; and, on the other hand, it seems to me that in the present condition of speculative thought such an attempt is hardly desirable. But the reader will find that the following essays, so far as they go, form a fairly connected treatment. All I can hope is that at points I have dealt suggestively with a deeply important subject.

The fourth essay is the statement of a philosophical position, which I try to develop and apply to religion in the essay which follows. It is reprinted by kind permission from 'Mind.' My cordial thanks are due to my friend, the Rev. D. Frew, B.D., for valuable aid in revising the proof-sheets.

G. G.

CASTLE-DOUGLAS, N.B.



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ESSAY I.

HEGEL AND THE LATER TENDENCY OF  
RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY





## ESSAY I.

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It may be well to state at the outset the object we set ourselves in the present paper. We have no idea of attempting to give a history of the Philosophy of Religion from Hegel to the present day. That has been already done, and by more competent hands. Our aim here is a more restricted one. We wish to compare and contrast the method and spirit of later religious philosophy with the method and spirit in which the subject was treated by Hegel. To go into the details of the treatment, however, lies beyond the scope of the essay. We shall deal more particularly with the attitude of reason to religion, trying to show the difference which becomes more and more apparent between the view of later thinkers on this point and the view of Hegel. The result, we think, will be to show that there has been a very marked process of change. This change corresponds to a general change in the philosophic standpoint. The consequence has been new ways

of regarding religion and its problems. We shall see that the earlier tendency was to exalt reason, while the later makes much of feeling: the earlier thinkers sought to offer something like a complete explanation, while the later are burdened with a sense of the limitations of knowledge and the defects of human insight. Or, what is the same thing from a slightly different point of view, we begin with a strong constructive movement which gradually exhausts itself, to be followed by a sceptical and critical tendency.

We propose, then, to begin our review with Hegel's 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.'<sup>1</sup> Hegel's work is the first profound, comprehensive, and systematic treatment of the whole subject. It marks the rise of a distinct and influential tendency. Moreover, Hegel was the first who sharply defined the problem of *Religionsphilosophie*, and gave the subject a determinate place in the body of the philosophical sciences. From that time the general scope of the science and the broad outlines of its

<sup>1</sup> Hegel's 'Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion' were published in 1832, after his death. A 2nd edition, forming vols. xi. and xii. of his collected works, was issued in 1840. I have given the titles of the works referred to in the course of the paper, but have not thought it necessary to burden the article with continuous references to the pages of the books themselves. I have taken pains to present accurately the views of the different writers. But if any one desires to verify my statements, he will, I think, have little difficulty in doing so.

treatment have been more or less fixed. Earlier discussions of religious problems present us with the religious aspect of philosophy rather than the Philosophy of Religion in the modern sense.<sup>1</sup>

Hegel was the strong son of an age when hopes in speculative effort ran high. As we all know, philosophy was for him *denkende Anschauung der Welt*, and he believed the universe must yield its secret at the pressure of thought. Logic lays bare the structure of the Absolute, and the philosopher traces its dialectic evolution in the spheres of nature and mind. In that evolution religion has its place, and its essence and meaning can be speculatively determined in the systematic whole of things. That place, we may remind our readers, is in the domain of mind which has become absolute spirit, and midway between Art and Speculative Philosophy. Religion manifests the Absolute in the form of representation (*Vorstellung*), while philosophy grasps it as the notion (*Begriff*). So religion shelters no mystery which thought cannot penetrate.

Hegel's general method is now tolerably familiar to us in this country. First an idea, or concept, is analysed; then it is shown by its own immanent movement to specify or differentiate itself in the judgment; and finally it issues in the conclusion, the concrete and individual whole. Applying this

<sup>1</sup> As in the case, *e.g.*, of Leibniz and Kant.

method to the matter on hand, he analyses the general or abstract concept of religion, and then passes to the historic religions as specific forms of the religious idea, and finally treats Christianity as the absolute or consummated notion of religion.

Without denying the high merits of Hegel's work, it is clear to us that it has also grave defects. In his reaction against Schleiermacher and the Romantic School, Hegel ignores the great importance of feeling in the religious consciousness. If the "feeling of dependence" were the essence of religion, then, he remarks scornfully, the dog would be the most religious of creatures. The animal, we are told, feels, but it is the characteristic of man to think. True, but man also feels, and he does not feel as the animal feels. It is safe to say that if man were a purely thinking being, he would not be the religious being that experience shows him to be. Occupying the standpoint of an all-embracing idealism, Hegel gives no adequate psychological analysis of the religious consciousness. He does not treat of faith in its specific character; and though he indicates the dialectic movement by which feeling passes into representation, he fails to recognise how essential the interplay of sentiment, emotion, and idea is in the maturest spiritual experience.

It would be unfair to criticise Hegel severely for his treatment of the historic religions: his materials

were necessarily scanty. Suffice it to note that the way in which he labels the particular religions is often fanciful; as every religion implies a complex process of development, no single term can fairly describe its character. The logical nexus which he discovers between the different religions is largely imaginary. So, profound and suggestive though it was, the weaker elements in Hegel's interpretation of religion were bound ere long to be recognised. Especially was this the case when the Hegelian School in Germany broke up, and its general method and principles were weighed in the critical balance and found wanting.

But there were interesting survivals of what we may term the gnostic attitude in the Philosophy of Religion. Such a survival is the 'Christliche Dogmatik' of the Zurich theologian, A. E. Biedermann.<sup>1</sup> Yet already a change of method is seen here. Biedermann does not seek to construe religion by applying to it the ready key of the dialectic process. He tries rather to rise to the speculative import of religion by analysing the historic phenomenon. He accepts from Hegel the principle that the Philosophy of Religion must

<sup>1</sup> The 1st edition of this work was published in 1869, and a 2nd edition, with a new epistemological introduction, in 1884. Under the same general category would fall, I believe, Lasson's 'Ueber Gegenstand und Behandlung der Religionsphilosophie.' But I have not examined the book.

exhibit the *notion* of what is historically given in the form of *representation*, or figurative thought. The historic matter to which he turns is the dogmatic system of the Christian Church. And his aim is to show how the difficulties and contradictions which exist within it lead up to, and find their solution in, the concluding and speculative part of his book.

A method like this is less likely to do violence to the facts. At the same time Biedermann's confidence in his ability to convey the whole truth in philosophic terminology is curious. When we read that the Absolute Being is "*reines In sich und Durchsichselbst-sein und in sich Grundsein alles Seins ausser Sich,*" the doubt will suggest itself how far this formidable phraseology really takes us. The unsympathetic will recall the scoff of Goethe's Mephistopheles,

"An Worte lässt sich trefflich glauben,  
Von einem Wort lässt sich kein Iota rauben."

Yet despite the reproach of empty logomachy levelled at it by theologians, Biedermann's work has substantial merits. The modern student, however, will doubt what the Swiss theologian did not appear to doubt, that he had succeeded in presenting in a final form the philosophic meaning of religion.



Another noteworthy example of the idealistic standpoint is the *Philosophy of Religion* of the late Principal Caird.<sup>1</sup> This well-known and suggestive book states the Hegelian position with great persuasiveness. Yet it is not exactly the Hegelianism of the older time. The formal dialectic recedes into the background, and it is recognised that the emotions have a place in the religious consciousness. But still it is thought which makes religion possible. And Dr Caird believes that reason can criticise religious experience, and resolve the contradictions of ordinary belief in the speculative interpretation of religion. In that interpretation God is the Absolute Self-consciousness to which all finite consciousnesses are organically related. The work only professes to be an introduction to the *Philosophy of Religion*. Yet we are forced to ask ourselves if the speculative view here unfolded could justify itself by solving the time-worn problems which confront the theologian. Is there proper room for such a view of human personality as would make human responsibility real and sin possible? If nature has no reality apart from God, are its evils only good in the making? For a human consciousness which blends constantly and inevitably with the divine, is there full scope for faith and reverence? Finally, in what sense is that Self ethical and

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 1880.

personal which is the unity of all thinkers and "all objects of all thought"? One cannot but doubt if, within the general speculative view outlined in this volume, room is to be found for a satisfactory treatment of these problems. One also misses in this book the explicit recognition of the truth, that the religious idea of God involves ethical predicates which are not the product of pure thinking. The careful reader carries away the impression, after the perusal of the book, that the author's genuine spiritual feeling unconsciously led him to a more positive and theistic view than his speculative principles strictly warranted.

The 'Philosophy of Religion' of Otto Pflieger is a work of wide learning and penetrating insight which is tempered by sound judgment.<sup>1</sup> While sympathising with the idealism of an earlier day, Pflieger modifies it at essential points and rejects the claim to absolute knowledge. The central place of reason and its rights are fully recognised, but alongside of it are set the ideals of practical reason. The theoretical and the practical reason must have one source, but to grasp and formulate their unity is not an achievement of thought but its goal. The method by which Pflieger sets himself to work out

<sup>1</sup> *Religionsphilosophie auf Geschichtlicher Grundlage*. The 1st edition was published in 1878, the 3rd edition, largely recast, in 1896.

the problem of *Religionsphilosophie* is, in his own words, "the genetic-speculative method." That is to say, the historic evolution of religious ideas is traced, and through the study of their development it is sought to determine their essence. History criticises itself, and its larger logic corrects subjective opinions and prejudices. This is, in fact, the Aristotelian method by which the essential nature of an object is brought to light by tracing its evolution.<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer works on these lines with much success. The difficulty is that the wealth of historic detail is apt to overburden the religious philosopher. And where materials are so varied, and earlier and later elements come down to us so intermingled, it is hard to determine their relative importance and the order of development. On the one hand, there is the temptation to select the facts which suit a preconceived theory. And on the other hand, the very desire to do justice to all the facts may cause the treatment to become purely historic. In which case philosophic principles are brought in afterwards to explain the historic process rather than shown to issue from it.

The epistemological theory which Pfleiderer adopts is transcendental realism. The conscious self builds

<sup>1</sup> Cp., e.g., *Politics*, A. 1252, a. 24 : εἰ δὴ τις ἐξ ἀρχῆς τὰ πράγματα φνόμενα βλέπειεν ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ ἐν τούτοις, κάλλιστ' ἂν οὕτω θεωρήσειεν.

up the world of experience from the impressions of sense. But the laws of our mind are not identical with the laws of the objective world, nor is thought the same as the being of things. The two spheres *correspond* to one another, whence we infer that a universal Reason co-ordinates the world of being and the world of thought. This, we are told, is the true form of the metaphysical proof of God's existence. But the argument from the moral order must supplement this proof and give ethical content to the idea of the Absolute Being. Pfeiderer thus holds a midway position between the view that asserts the perfect cognisibility of God and the view that denies all theoretical knowledge of Him. We know God both speculatively and practically, but our knowledge though real is limited. The whole inner side of the divine life is beyond our grasp. And when we try to express the idea of a Being who is beyond space and time, our thought must perforce be figurative.

To our mind this is a sound and satisfactory standpoint. At the same time we think that objections can be urged against the special form of transcendental realism which Pfeiderer accepts as an epistemological theory, though this is not the place to urge them.<sup>1</sup>

In discussing the later tendency in the Philosophy

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Essay v., where the point is discussed.

of Religion we must not omit the name of Lotze from our survey. No doubt Lotze's direct contribution to the subject is not extensive, and is contained in a small volume of 'Outlines' compiled after his death from class lectures.<sup>1</sup> In the 'Microcosmus,' however, he had handled in some detail the questions of the personality of God and the nature of religion. And more important still, his philosophical principles have greatly influenced many who have worked in the department of religious philosophy and speculative theology.

From first to last Lotze was the strenuous foe of the Hegelian attempt to explain the universe as the work of thought. He constantly recurs to the contrast between the concrete world in which man acts and feels and the spectral region of thought formulæ. Thought, he tells us, interprets but does not make reality, and in its movement it always depends on something which is not itself. Thought is general, but the core of reality lies in the individual self-feeling. The real is that which has *ā* being for itself. Hence Lotze, following in the track of Leibniz, builds up a view of things from a pluralism as a starting-point. His monads, however, unlike those of his great predecessor, act and react on one another, and by their action and passion make possible the orderly system of things. Here

<sup>1</sup> Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie, 1884.

we can only note the highly important and significant step by which Lotze, in order to explain how interaction is possible, converts his pluralism into a monism. Individuals act and react on one another, for in the last resort they all fall within the one real Being.

It must be confessed that this Absolute Being, the M. of the 'Metaphysics,' seems a somewhat unpromising object for a Philosophy of Religion to deal with. One cannot help thinking of the Substance of Spinoza. But a remarkable change seems to come over Lotze's thought when he goes on to consider his Absolute from the ethical and religious point of view. The Supreme Being is personal, or rather, more than personal in the human sense, for man is only an imperfect personality. The inner distinction of the Absolute from its own states makes possible, we are told, its personality. The justification for attributing ethical and spiritual content to the idea of God, Lotze finds in the value-judgments of the human subject. Man claims that the Being who is the ground of all things must respond to the demands of his spiritual life, and what ought to be must be that which truly is.

The stress which Lotze laid on the value-judgment has had a marked influence on subsequent religious thought. No doubt the idea in its first form goes back to Kant, who spoke of the ends

given by the practical reason, and of the moral imperative laid upon the subject to act as a member of a kingdom of ends. Here under another name we have the thought of a system of values, which has its source in the demands of the inner life of men. Lotze, however, brought the conception into vital relation with the emotional and spiritual experience of the individual, and asserted for it a validity independent of intellectual processes. Hence he claims the right to speak of the Infinite Being as Love, and to regard the mechanism of nature and the course of history as the unfolding of a loving purpose. We are now listening to the language of theism. But whether Lotze's ethical construction of the Absolute coheres with the metaphysical basis on which it rests may well be doubted.

Beyond question the thought of Lotze has very materially influenced the subsequent development of the Philosophy of Religion. Lotze's continued reiteration of the view that the formal activity of thought could not give the content of reality, and that the categories of logic could neither do justice to the processes of nature nor to the movements of history, gave strength and definiteness to the reaction against the Hegelian system. His insistence on the uniqueness of individuality tended in the same direction, and imparted vitality to the

movement towards pluralism. And lastly, in setting the claims of the value-judgment in a new and fuller light, he made clear the right of spiritual consciousness to have a voice in the final interpretation of reality. No one who is acquainted with recent developments in philosophy and theology will deny the great influence of this side of Lotze's work. The reader will no doubt be able to trace it in the works we have still to mention.

A very able treatise on the Philosophy of Religion, which, while showing traces of Lotze's influence, is in many ways an independent treatment of the subject, is the work of Professor Siebeck.<sup>1</sup> Like Lotze and Pfleiderer, he does not admit the claim of speculative thought to know God fully. But while Siebeck differs from Pfleiderer in the view he takes of the essence of religion, and the characteristic features of its development, he is at one with him in holding that we have some speculative knowledge of the Absolute World-Ground. Yet he lays less stress on the value of theoretical cognition. It is a means and not an end, and has its place as an element in the personal movement of the ethical and religious life. That life, expressing itself in value-judgments, postulates for its ground and explanation a Supreme Value. The theoretical conception of a Highest Being finds its continua-

<sup>1</sup> Lehrbuch der Religionsphilosophie, 1893.



tion and conclusion in the practical belief in a Reality which is the Highest Good. Siebeck does not think it necessarily invalid to conceive God *ex analogia hominis*. But he holds strongly that pure thought cannot give us the idea of God, who is the object of spiritual faith, and the source and end of personal religion. Metaphysics, he contends, is monistic; religion is individual; and a theoretical solution of this difference is not possible.

It cannot be doubted that the movement hostile to a theoretical philosophy of religion has been powerfully helped by the theological system of Ritschl, and by the work of his numerous followers. Ritschl at one period was disposed to admit that it was the function of philosophy to try to comprehend the world as a whole, and so religion as an element in it. But he finally abandoned this view, and excluded theoretical philosophy entirely from the domain of religion.<sup>1</sup> Taking stand with Kant, Ritschl maintains the strict limitation of the theoretical faculty, and insists that the idea of God is not an object of speculative cognition at all. The religious consciousness moves altogether in the sphere of value-judgments. God ceases to be a valid conception for the reason which is common

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Pfeiderer, 'Development of Theology,' p. 184. Ritschl's theological system is unfolded in the 3rd vol. of his 'Christliche Lehre der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung.'

to all men, but is posited as the answer to inner needs and desires. Hence the Ritschlian system is a sort of theological positivism which seeks to rest on, and to elaborate itself out of, historical experience. The Christian view of God, and the corresponding view of the world, are neither justified nor refuted by reason. Their only verification is the way in which they have satisfied and still satisfy the needs of the inner life.

In a similar spirit one of Ritschl's best known followers, Kaftan, expresses himself in a lecture on 'Christianity and Philosophy.'<sup>1</sup> There is no way, he tells us, leading from natural science and psychology to philosophy; nor is the last the central science, as Aristotle conceived it. Philosophy only exists in the true sense as the practical reason of Kant, *i.e.*, as the doctrine of the highest good; and here only do we have the key to the meaning of reality. In other words, the idea of God is posited by the moral and spiritual life, and receives no justification whatever from pure reason. The function of thought is subordinate; it is the servant of the ethical will from which it derives its value.

The School of Ritschl is thus thoroughly opposed to any application of speculative philosophy to the interpretation of religion. It treats theology as a purely historical science, and justifies its principles

<sup>1</sup> Das Christenthum und die Philosophie, 1895.

by the way in which it is claimed that they enter into the spiritual experience of Christians. Yet one may well doubt if the Ritschlian notion of religion has been developed without any aid from theoretical reflexion on the nature of God and man. The norm by which we appreciate and select our historical materials can hardly be a merely empirical one. Ritschl's speculative agnosticism has found a wide following in Germany, and it is not unintelligible as a reaction against the earlier gnosticism. But the foundations of the system are so unstable that one cannot believe the superstructure will permanently withstand the tide of criticism.

The other works which I shall mention—all belonging to the last twenty years—are not written by Germans; but they bear out the opinion I stated at the outset, that the newer attitude in *Religionsphilosophie* is distinctly critical and sceptical. I refer first to the acute and powerful book of a distinguished Dutch scholar, the late Prof. Rauwenhoff.<sup>1</sup>

The Philosophy of Religion, he holds, is not to be treated as a mere aspect of general philosophy. It has its own sphere and matter. It has to give a psychological account of the origin and development of religion, and then goes on to investigate its essence and justification. And the relation into

<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of Religion. The original Dutch edition appeared in 1887. There is a German translation by Hanne.

which it enters with general philosophy will depend on the results at which it arrives in treating these subjects.

The foundation of religion, according to Rauwenhoff, lies in the unconditioned consciousness of duty. The ethical consciousness itself postulates religious faith. But the essence of religious faith is just faith in a moral order. Unlike Kant, Rauwenhoff does not find that the moral consciousness postulates the idea of God or immortality. Kant, he urges, was really bringing in the theoretical judgment in an illegitimate way when he sought to make the conception of God a postulate of the practical reason. All that the ethical consciousness postulates is the existence of a moral order of things. The necessary implicate of this faith is, that the world is so constituted that the moral law can rule therein. Kant, it will be remembered, refused to admit that the notion of end or final cause had objective validity in nature. Rauwenhoff, however, finds that nature not only allows of but positively favours the idea that a principle of teleological connexion obtains within it.

The question naturally presses itself on us, What place in religion does Rauwenhoff assign to the idea of God, and what reality does he concede to it? If faith in an ethical order is the essence of religion, is that order only another name for God, as Fichte, for

example, at one time held? It was to be expected that one deeply imbued with the Kantian spirit like this writer should find the proofs for the being of God, both in the older and revised form, untenable. A scientific proof of the divine existence is impossible, and the ethical consciousness fails to give us the assurance that an objective reality corresponds to our notion of deity. The idea of God which faith gives us is the product of poetic imagination. And if we seek a counterpart of it in the real world, we get only a bare scientific notion. Faith creates for us a picture of the divine; and, although theoretical proof is impossible, we can at least apply to it the negative test that it must not be obviously false when translated into a scientific conception. Yet it seems we have ground for believing that we have truth under this poetic form, truth at all events so far as our stage of development enables us to grasp it, truth clad in a partially transparent garb. And we accept faith's object as containing truth, because otherwise the realities around us are unintelligible. But Rauwenhoff denies our right to construct an idea of God *ex analogia hominis*: attributes of the finite are not to be transferred to the infinite. On the other hand, he maintains that religious imagination has a claim upon belief when its object corresponds to the need of the inner life and aids the realisation of our spiritual capacity.

That truth underlies the symbolism of religious faith we have practical assurance. At most thought can only furnish religion with a *Weltanschauung* to which faith can link itself, and in which its ideals can be realised.

Rauwenhoff's book is valuable for its keen and searching analysis and its criticism of religious conceptions. His critical knife, wielded with a fearless hand, leaves nothing untouched. The reader who accepts his arguments will come to the conclusion that religion offers us an intolerable deal of assumptions with a poor pittance of assured fact. Still Rauwenhoff cannot fairly be accused of reducing the object of religion to a purely subjective creation after the manner of Feuerbach. At the same time I do not see that, from his point of view, any convincing reply can be given to those who ask a reason for the faith that is in us. If reason is impotent to lead us towards a God, why should not faith give us mere mythology? Where much is confessedly pure poetry, why may not all be imagination? To satisfy a need is in itself no sufficient guarantee of truth, though the fact may go to support and confirm conclusions to which we are led on other grounds.

A work less subtle and thorough than the foregoing, though interesting and eloquent in its way, is the *Philosophy of Religion* of the French theo-

logian Auguste Sabatier.<sup>1</sup> The larger portion of the book is occupied with the psychology of religion and a critical discussion of Christian faith and Christian doctrines; it does not concern us here. In the third part of the volume, however, there is a chapter entitled "A Critical Theory of Religious Knowledge," to which we may refer.

Sabatier adopts the theory that the God-consciousness is the solution of the conflict between the ego and the world, and between the pure and practical reason. Without at present impugning the correctness of this view as a psychological explanation, we ask, "What is supposed to be the character and validity of the knowledge of God attained in this way?" The act, says Sabatier, by which the human spirit posits God is an act of faith, not of reason,—the spiritual counterpart of the instinct of self-preservation in the natural world. Yet we are told that the practical solution implies the possibility and the hope of a theoretical solution. For the pure and the practical reason are united in the subject which knows and acts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*, 3rd edition, 1897. Sabatier's book has been the occasion of a good deal of criticism and controversy among French Protestant theologians: *vid.*, *e.g.*, 'La Connaissance Religieuse,' by H. Bois, of Montauban, and 'Le Danger Moral de l'Evolutionisme Religieux,' by G. Frommel.

<sup>2</sup> Compare with this R. A. Lipsius, 'Glauben und Wissen,' p. 54 ff. But I cannot see that Sabatier's position, as it is further defined, really admits of such a hope.

And further, in asserting the sovereignty of spirit in ourselves and in the world, we affirm that we and the world have in spirit the principle and end of our being. There is here apparently an ontological inference from a psychological experience which at least needs explanation and defence. For the movement of soul which finds in God a solution of its felt inner contradiction does not in itself guarantee the objective supremacy of spirit in nature and life.

Does Sabatier, then, hold that our knowledge of God which is subjectively realised is at the same time objectively valid? In common with recent theologians he distinguishes sharply the existential-judgment from the value-judgment, which are as the foci of an ellipse in relation yet always apart. The former deals with the external facts of nature and their relations, and excludes any reference to the sentiment or will of the subject. In the latter the reference to the will and feeling of the subject is central and essential; and to this order belongs our religious knowledge. We do not apprehend God as a being without us, nor do we grasp Him by logical thought: we experience Him in the heart. Religious knowledge and knowledge of nature are, therefore, two separate orders not to be deduced from each other; the passage from the one to the other is a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*. Spiritual truths are apprehended by a subjective



act, an act of the "heart," to use Pascal's word. Readers of the 'Pensées' will remember the sentence, "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas." These interior reasons, we learn from Sabatier, are as sure in their way as the truths of science. An objective demonstration of God, were it possible, would be futile. To the man without piety it would be useless, to the man who is pious it would be superfluous. It is a curious symptom of the philosophic temper of the age that this clear-cut division of knowledge into two diverse kinds should seem satisfactory to many. I cannot see how the fact that both orders fall within the consciousness of the subject can be a guarantee for their solidarity and correspondence, unless we further grant that the idea of God as unitary ground of both series has theoretical validity. Moreover the heart is *semper varium et mutabile*; and if the verities of religion are apprehended only by inner spiritual experience, universality and consistency of belief appear to be impossible.

The Danish philosopher Höffding, whose intellectual affinity is more with Spinoza than with Kant, has lately given us a striking, and in some respects independent, treatment of the Philosophy of Religion.<sup>1</sup> The book offers abundant material

<sup>1</sup> Religionsphilosophie, 1901. German translation with the co-operation of the author, by F. Bendixen.

for discussion, but I must confine myself to one or two salient points which bear on the subject in hand.

The task which Höffding sets to himself is to determine the place and significance of religion in life. A Philosophy of Religion instead of solving problems rather shows how these arise, and explains their meaning and bearing. He begins with an epistemological discussion which yields the conclusion that religion can lay no claim to explain the world where science fails. And as the result of an interesting argument, Höffding finds that theoretical thought gives no objective validity to the idea of God. What is given in experience is *totality*; multiplicity and unity are abstractions, and the one is not to be deduced from the other. Materialism is indeed a fallacy, but idealism lacks cogent proof. It is even possible that reality may have other aspects than those we term psychical and material, for the division is purely empirical.<sup>1</sup> We must, no doubt, presuppose some kind of ultimate unity as the ground of the interaction and interdependence of things, but this is the goal to which knowledge cannot rise. Höffding thinks his standpoint might be termed "critical monism." He denies our right to apply analogically concepts

<sup>1</sup> This of course suggests Spinoza. But how much is a possibility, which has no positive point of contact with reality, worth?

valid within experience to the ultimate ground of all experience. Notions like 'personality' and 'activity' are quite inapplicable to God, who can mean no more for logical thought than the principle of explanation. Even more thoroughly than Rauwenhoff, Höffding reduces the dogmas of religion to mere poetry and symbolism.

It might seem, then, that religion had no title to exist at all. That depends, however, on what we mean by religion, and Höffding means something curiously vague and abstract. In his 'Outlines of Psychology' he defined religion as "cosmic life-feeling," and here we learn that it signifies a "Faith in the maintenance of Value" (*Erhaltung des Wertes*), the conviction that value persists in the world.

Like many others Höffding thinks the religious consciousness expresses itself in value-judgments; but in place of the ethical order which Rauwenhoff found to be its presupposition, he finds a general principle implied. And this principle is, as we have said, that the good (value) persists, and maintains itself, through all the changing forms it assumes in the world-development.<sup>1</sup> As parallels to the spiritual principle we have the conservation of energy in nature, and the principle of continuity or causal connexion in science. All three, inasmuch as

<sup>1</sup> With this we may compare M. Arnold's faith in "a stream of tendency which makes for righteousness."

they carry in them an inference as to the future from the basis of a present and past experience which is incomplete, involve faith.

So far as I can see, the Philosophy of Religion in Höffding's hands casts no light on the deeper meaning of religion, nor discloses any satisfactory ground for its emergence on the stage of human history. The developed religions, on this view, contain a great mass of spurious accretions. The latter are the work of thought, whose proper function in religion is very subordinate; but it has managed to import into religion many unwarrantable assumptions. It has, for example, illegitimately personified the notion of a highest value. We must discard, however, this illegitimate extra-belief, for the essence of religious faith is no more than faith in an abstract principle of value. Höffding thinks the principle can be shown to be implicit in all the historical forms of religion. Even if it were so, it does not follow that a colourless common residuum is the constitutive idea. And I cannot comprehend how "faith in the persistence of value" is an adequate psychological motive for the historic development of the religious consciousness. But even if we accept Höffding's view of the essence of religion, its validity on his theory remains uncertain. For we cannot pass simply from appreciation of value, which is subjective, to the

persistence of value as an objective principle in the universe.

In his epistemology Höffding leaves the gulf unbridged between the value-series in the mind and the real or causal series in the objective world. And to do him justice, he admits "conservation of value" is, strictly considered, a principle held by faith, which cannot be proved by reason to be immanent in the world-process. Faith, however, claims its object to be real: it does not say, "I must act as if this were true," but "This is true." And though the outlook of *Religionsphilosophie* be restricted in these days, it ought at least to say something to justify or condemn the claims of faith. But Prof. Höffding gives us no positive ground of confidence in his principle. He only goes the length of trying to remove certain objections which may be urged against it. He adduces arguments to show why the apparent loss or extinction of value in the world-process need not be so in fact. Yet when all is said, the principle hangs in the air without proper support. It cannot be argued that the persistence of value is a postulate of the existence of value; and the purely empirical warrant for the belief is by no means convincing. We may fine down the essence of religion to a thin abstraction, but so long as it implies that we postulate ethical law as realised, and maintaining itself in the objective world, we must seek some

guarantee for this in the character of the ultimate Reality. And the vague "critical monism" of Höffding gives no real basis to the conservation of value as an immanent law of the universe.

I shall conclude this survey by a short reference to the philosophical point of view indicated by Prof. James in his extremely interesting lectures on 'Varieties of Religious Experience.'

We have spoken of a philosophical point of view for convenience' sake, but Prof. James is a foe to metaphysics in the old sense. In Plato's days he would have been ranked among the *μισολόγοι* or "haters of ideas." Readers of his book will remember that religious experiences somehow well up into the conscious region from the sub-conscious self. Distinguishing the existential from the value-judgment, he properly remarks that the description of their genesis does not involve a pronouncement on the real meaning and worth of these experiences. Has Prof. James, then, any theory of the philosophic meaning of the psychological process? He will not call his view a theory, it is only an hypothesis; and "who says hypothesis renounces the ambition to be coercive in his arguments?" In religious experience we feel ourselves to be connected with a "something more," we feel the "conscious person to be continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come." But James declares explicitly,

“What the more characteristically divine facts are apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state I know not.” The intellectual constructions by which we seek to explain our religious experiences are worthless. They are “over-beliefs,” unconvincing structures reared by thought on the basis supplied by feeling. Philosophy lives in words and fails to be objectively convincing. “The recesses of feeling are the only places in the world in which we can catch real fact in the making.” So apparently Faust was right, *Gefühl ist Alles*. Naturally God, as commonly conceived, falls to be reckoned as an ‘over-belief.’ The practical needs of religion are satisfied by faith in a larger power friendly to us: indeed “anything larger will do, if it is large enough to trust for the next step.” In fact, the universe “may be a collection of larger selves” without any true unity in it. On such high matters there is no certainty, but “human nature is willing to live on a chance,” *Il faut parier*. And Prof. James is willing to make his ‘personal venture’ on the ‘over-belief’ that there is something divine in the universe after all.

If we are to believe this trenchant writer, theology and philosophy of religion are deeply discredited. Feeling is mistress of the house, and reason is the obedient drudge,—“it finds arguments for our convictions, for, indeed, it has to find them.” The

‘philosophic climate’ in which Mr James lives is radically different from that in which the men flourished who trusted thought to read the riddle of things. But I shall not attempt to criticise the writer’s position in detail. In these lectures he only indicates his philosophic standpoint in outline, reserving its fuller development for another occasion. But we are told enough to infer that the claim of any religion to be a ‘reasonable service’ is quite unsubstantiated. We hardly exaggerate James’s point of view when we say that spiritual experience is an eruption from beneath, which inundates the conscious region,—an experience whose ultimate origin and meaning we may speculate about, if we please, with the certainty that no certainty is possible on the subject. Prof. James’s hostility to speculative construction is firmly rooted in his first principles. Fundamental fact is given only by feeling; belief is a matter of will rather than of intellect. In conceptual thinking we dwell in a shadowy realm of abstractions, the dim reflection of the world of living realities. The inherent weakness of thought makes a Philosophy of Religion, save in the most restricted sense, a fruitless task. We have reached a point of view the polar opposite of that with which we began.

Here, then, we close our short survey. It lays no claim to be complete, but seeks merely to in-



dicating in a general way the growth of a tendency. We have taken Hegel's work as representing the high-water mark of confidence in the speculative method and in its power of solving the problems of religion. And it appeared both interesting and instructive to point out the difference of spirit and aim with which religious philosophy has been pursued during the past generation. It would not be true to say that the anti-speculative tendency is the exclusive tendency, but it is, on the whole, the prevailing tendency. On the other hand, thinkers like Dr E. Caird and Prof. Royce have made important contributions to the subject in quite recent times, and they have a real faith in the capacity of reason to deal effectively with the highest problems. Works like these at least serve to show that idealism in one form or another is still a force in England and America, and that Pragmatism, as represented by Prof. James, will not win its way without dispute. But the persistence of an older tendency is compatible with the growth of a new and different tendency, and the evidence for the latter is convincing. The general direction of the current is fairly clear. We begin with the Hegelian reaction against the exaltation of feeling in religion by the Romantic School and its endeavour to explain religion through the dialectic of thought. The absolute claim of

reason gradually broke down, and the need of an unbiassed study of historic facts asserted itself. The philosophic standpoint moved back towards Kant, and the importance of feeling was again recognised in the stress which Lotze and many after him laid on the value-judgment. Some of the best work in the Philosophy of Religion has been done by those who have treated the pure and the practical reason, the intellectual and the value-judgment, as complementary and mutually supporting, and so have endeavoured to rise to a view of God which satisfies the whole man. The recognition of feeling and will as well as reason was amply justified, and is indispensable to the proper treatment of religious phenomena.

But the further development of tendency was to reduce thought to an entirely subordinate place, and to regard the other elements alone as the essentials of the religious consciousness. In harmony with this the problem of the Philosophy of Religion comes to be viewed as a much narrower one. Thought is sent on no adventurous task of scaling the heavens, but is put to the humbler work of ordering the house on earth. Little is said of the ontological questions raised by religion, and that little is mainly negative. We are rather invited to consider the rise and growth of religion as an element in human culture, to determine its

relation to other elements, to understand its function and to appreciate its value in life. One has no desire to ignore the worth of work of this kind, and the Psychology of Religion has profited much in recent years by the concentration of attention on the subjective aspects of religion. At the same time, there is a danger in turning away from the larger problem of religious philosophy. Man is not merely interested in knowing how religion *works* in life, he desires also to know how far the claim which religion makes of setting before us a true view of the world can be justified. If he is asked to look on theological creeds as no more than poetry and symbol, he will press the question, "What, then, is true?" And justly so; for the effective negation is only made from a positive standpoint. When the philosopher criticises and finds contradictions in the current religious conceptions, he must try to vindicate his criticisms by revealing some higher and more harmonious point of view. To what end? cries the sceptic; the new view will turn out inadequate, like all those which have gone before. There is no doubt of this. Pure truth, as Lessing said, is for God alone; but to man belongs the right and the duty to search for truth. It will be enough if the later synthesis represent a further stage of progress, a more advanced point at which the pilgrim spirit

of humanity pauses, and surveys in the light of reason the wide fields of experience, ere it again resumes its onward journey towards the kingdom of all truth. Agnosticism is intelligible as a reaction, but it can never be an abiding attitude of the human mind.

Accordingly, while we are clear that the claims of Hegelianism were extravagant, we are just as clear that the position—say of Prof. James—is equally extravagant. Granted that a purely rational nature would not be religious, it is no less true that a purely feeling and willing nature would not be religious either. Thought is not a subordinate but an essential element in the religious consciousness, for feeling and will are useless without the presence of ideas. We cannot discredit reason without likewise casting discredit on religion. The self-conscious spirit demands to be in harmony with itself, and this it cannot be if reason is excluded from its deepest experiences.

It is usual for those who take the opposite view to urge that in practice thought has very little to do with the making or unmaking of religion. Apollo and Minerva, as Comte said, were never refuted: they vanished away because they no longer answered a spiritual need. Logic does not create faith, and faith often resists the assaults of logic. There is an element of truth here. No one will

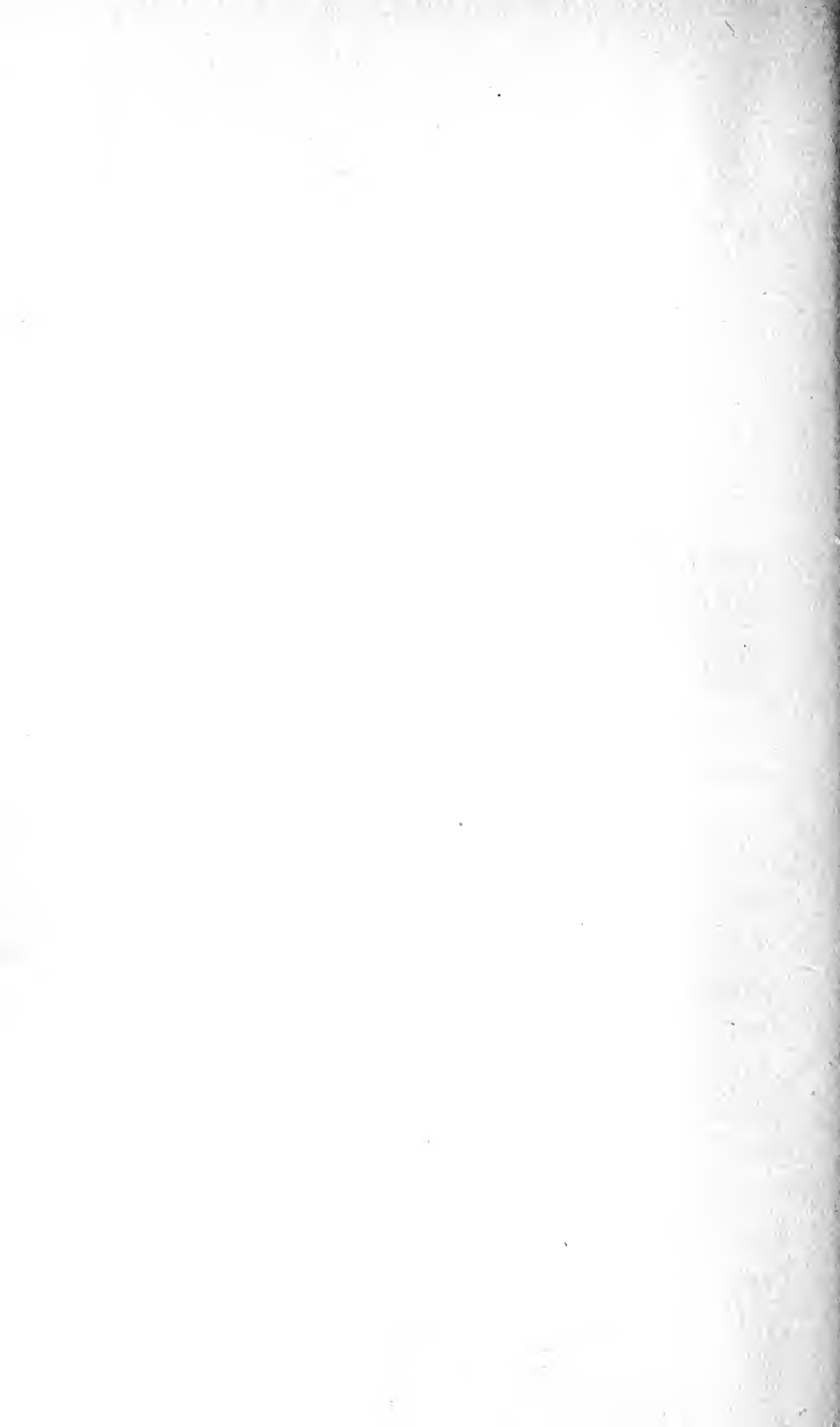
say that purely intellectual forces built up any religion; and we know that the conservative influence of feeling and sentiment can keep doctrines alive long after they have been disowned by reason. Yet even here the credulous devotee does not suppose his belief to be irrational, although he is not able to show that it is reasonable. The "credo, quia absurdum est" of Tertullian, the apotheosis of purely emotional certainty, is, in its extravagance, an impracticable attitude for normal human nature. The developed religions claim to be consistent with reason, and the growth of doctrine attests the need that religion should appeal to the mind as well as satisfy the heart. Indeed the secondary function of thought in religion is apparent rather than real. Religious experience inevitably clothes itself in forms of thought, and acquires meaning and general value only as it does so. And the intellectual outlook reacts on the religious feelings, and gives a tone to them. The subtle change of spiritual climate by which people explain the decadence of a faith once vigorous is due in part at least to intellectual causes. Greek philosophy had much to do in producing the religious atmosphere in which Apollo and Minerva withered away. And the Christian consciousness to-day reflects in an unmistakable way the influence of modern science.

On the other hand, it must be fully granted that

pure thought can never give us the God whom the religious consciousness demands. Hence those are right who urge that value-judgments are essential in religion. For only through the value realised in experience can we give positive spiritual content to the idea of Him who is the living Source and the abiding Ground of all truth and goodness. The error which the religious philosopher must guard against is one-sidedness. Religion is a rich and complex growth, and he must endeavour to do justice to all its elements.

ESSAY II.

THE NATURAL SCIENCES, ETHICS,  
AND RELIGION







## ESSAY II.

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DURING the first two or three decades of the latter half of the nineteenth century much was heard of the disagreement between Science and Religion. And even that general public which cares nothing for the controversies of the schools was in this case interested in the issues of the dispute, for views were being urged which, it was thought, seriously menaced the integrity of the dominant Faith. In a sense, however, it was only an old war which had entered on a new phase. The quarrel between Science and Religion goes at least as far back as the days of Anaxagoras, who was accused of impiety because he ventured to say that the glorious Sun-God was only a red-hot stone. Such incidents, however, were isolated and occasional; with the advent of the modern world the protests of individuals took the larger and more permanent form of antagonism between two discordant points of view.

In the sixteenth century Natural Science, which had so far won its independence and had entered on its marvellous career, came into sharp conflict with the Church. Nor can we wonder that the Church, whose way of thinking was based on the Ptolemaic system, found the Copernican scheme of the universe revolutionary and dangerous. But the new Astronomy was not to be denied; and if Religion protested against it at the first, it was forced to come to terms with it at the last. Nor is it likely that the result will be different in the case of the controversy which sprang up last century. The geologic record is just as convincing on the vast age of the earth as astronomy is on the boundless extension of the heavens. The Church, as many now recognise, must adjust its outlook to the larger scheme of things. We have even fallen on a time when the more thoughtful public is no longer interested in attempts to reconcile Genesis and Geology. The Darwinian theory of the Descent of Man is not, of course, universally accepted yet, for the evidence is still incomplete. But the old prejudice is broken down, and the general readiness to regard it as a good working hypothesis is a victory for Science. At the close of the nineteenth century we find the doctrine of a special series of creative acts has fallen into the background,—a doctrine religious

in its origin and long an article of religious belief. In its stead the notion of evolution, or of continuous development, has won widespread acceptance as a sound principle of scientific method.

The dispassionate observer at present naturally asks, What have been the gains and losses on either side? In what case have the so-called victories of Science left Religion? It is historically evident that Copernicus dealt piety no deadly blow, nor in these days does it seem hardly smitten by the followers of Darwin. Those who thought to do Religion grievous hurt have found their sword pass through no earthly body, and they have seen the foeman, like the legendary heroes in the Norse Walhalla, still vigorous and ready to renew the fight. The votaries of Religion, proud of its power to survive assault, might say to its opponents,—

“You do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence;  
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,  
And your vain blows malicious mockery.”

Are we to suppose, then, that Religion dwells in some supersensuous region where, as Kant held, Science can neither make nor mar? Not exactly so. But we must insist that it is necessary to distinguish between the substance and the secondary products, between the spiritual life and the theories

and inferences which have grown up around it. The former is of primary, the latter of lesser, importance. Religion gives meaning and imparts a purpose to life, and therefore it involves a general view of the world. It bids man regard himself and his surroundings, the world and historic events, in the light of an all-embracing end. But the reality of the object of religious faith, and the value of the spiritual life, do not stand or fall with a particular interpretation of the connexion of phenomena in nature or the order of their development in the cosmic whole. One cannot see how the worth of Religion is impaired by the nebular theory of the origin of the solar system, or by the Darwinian account of the descent of our race. Certain traditional views which have been associated with Religion will have to be corrected; Religion itself is not discredited.

Indeed, when we look into the matter closely, we see that the quarrel of Science has been much more with specific theological doctrines than with Religion as a whole. In an earlier day theology set forth what it thought was the religious explanation of facts in nature. There was no existing body of scientific knowledge to control its activity. At a later time, when Science set to work in this field, it gradually discovered that these facts came under the dominion of natural law

and causality. It therefore strenuously resisted the theological dogma as an explanation, and upheld the sufficiency of the mechanical interpretation. Now the controversy is dying down; and those who have the interests of Religion at heart are recognising that they can frequently accept the explanations of Science as valid in their sphere without sacrificing the spiritual interests they hold sacred.

But a *rapprochement* like this has not always been possible. For Science has sometimes not been content to attack weak and exposed outposts of the spiritual kingdom, but has hurled itself against the citadel. And Religion has had to fight *pro aris et focis*. I refer to the assaults of materialism which, in the name of Science, sought to reduce life and mind to matter and force. One can understand how vigorous spirits, elated at the success of the mechanical method of explanation, were bold to think that the principle might be indefinitely extended in its scope. Thus in his famous Belfast Address, we find Prof. Tyndall speaking of the "intellectual necessity" by which we discern in matter "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." Another well-known writer has said, "As surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is coextensive with know-

ledge, and feeling, and action.”<sup>1</sup> So wrote Prof. Huxley in 1868; and though he never repudiated the words, it may be doubted whether he would have chosen to speak so confidently twenty-five years later. For the discussions of the last thirty years have been quite unfavourable to the contention that mental and spiritual processes can ever be explained by concepts like matter and force. The “beggarly elements” of things must certainly be very much better than they are supposed to be, if they are to beget life and mind. Materialism really assumes what it pretends to deduce. And while it has attacked religion in the name of Science, in the end it has itself been discredited.

But it is not only with Science that Religion has had disputes. The domain of Ethics lies so near to that of Religion that concord between them would seem to be essential and in the best interests of both. Yet though near relations they have occasionally differed with one another. Historically this has usually happened when the moral ideal has advanced beyond the level represented in existing religious thought and practice. Thus we see the Greek dramatists purifying and elevating the old stories about the Gods, which had the sanction of the ancient faith, but were condemned by their

<sup>1</sup> It ought to be said, however, that this does not necessarily mean more than a thorough-going psycho-physical parallelism.

moral consciousness. In the person of Xenophanes we find the philosopher roundly denouncing the traditional way of representing the divine powers as immoral. Again, among the Hebrews the prophetic movement of the eighth century B.C. reveals the conflict of a deeper ethical consciousness with a religion which had stiffened into a mechanical and external cult. Indeed the uprising of the ethical spirit in new strength has always been a powerful source of religious reform and progress. Here, however, it is plain that the quarrel of Ethics is not with Religion as such, but with its defective or unsatisfactory form. The demand of the moral consciousness is for a purification of the old faith; it has no thought of offering itself as the substitute of Religion.

And we can understand why it has been so. For Religion is older than Ethics, and under its sheltering shadow the virtues have grown up. To cast off piety altogether was to the men of an earlier time to pass outside the social bond, to break with immemorial custom, to be an outcast from family and tribe. But the modern world has witnessed the rise of Ethics to a new importance and a larger independence. The moral life is no longer regarded simply as an aspect of the religious life, or as the outer court of the spiritual temple. Indeed in these days the demand is frequently made that morality

should be cultivated for its own sake entirely, and we are told it needs no ulterior sanctions. Here is something sure, it is urged, on which many may agree and whose practical value no one doubts; but in Religion all is uncertainty and matter of dispute. Thus in recent years Ethical Societies have sprung up in England and America, which aim at supplying moral teaching and stimulus apart from religious dogma. The leading spirits in these societies do not aim at a reformation of the Church; they rather appeal to the class which regards Religion in any of its historic forms as unsatisfactory. Morality, it is contended, wants no religious panoply; it is itself the guarantee of its practical validity and value. Although individuals may disagree about the ultimate foundations of Ethics, they can co-operate harmoniously in an association which seeks to deepen the consciousness of duty and to strengthen the sentiment of social obligation.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we have a denial of the claim of Religion to be the necessary guide of life. And we learn that ethical principles supply all the rules of conduct men require. To decide as to the rights and wrongs of this dispute we must come to an understanding about the meaning and function of Ethics and Religion.

<sup>1</sup> In a lecture entitled "The Ethical Movement Defined," Dr Stanton Coit gives as its main doctrines—(1) devotion to the good of the world, and (2) the highest reverence for individual duty.



The fact that both Natural Science and Ethics have been at variance with Religion gives point and urgency to the problem of the relation of Religion to the other elements in human culture. Before, then, passing to the further questions involved in the nature and origin, the value and ultimate validity of Religion, we may clear the ground a little by discussing the relation of Religion to Natural Science and to Ethics. This preliminary investigation will, I think, be useful if, by way of contrast and distinction, it helps to bring into clearer light what is characteristic in Religion as well as make plain the significance and scope of scientific and ethical principles. Whatever view is taken of them, Natural Science, Ethics, and Religion are three normal and constant aspects of human culture. Each has its practical justification and title to existence. And if we try to understand their several functions, and to see their respective limitations, we may perhaps find that it is possible to treat them as coherent elements in the larger whole of human experience.

We commonly distinguish between a scientific, a religious, and a philosophic point of view. Each offers in its way an explanation of facts in experience, but the explanations are on different levels. It may be useful for us to touch briefly on the historic development of these distinctions.

In the beginnings of culture the three spheres were not differentiated; the primitive cosmogony or religious myth was at once science, religion, and philosophy wrapt up in one. In early Greek thought the first decisive step was taken which separated the scientific from the religious view of things. For the myths of the popular creed an explanation of the cosmos by known causes was substituted. But as yet no distinction was drawn between science and philosophy. The *ὄντα* of the Pre-Socratic thinkers, as Aristotle has told us, were simply the *αἰσθητά*. Plato, in clearly marking off sense-perception (*αἰσθησις*) from thought (*νόησις*), opened out the way for this further differentiation. In the Platonic system the sciences form a kind of introductory discipline to philosophy, the supreme science of *διαλεκτική*.<sup>1</sup> The type of science Plato found in mathematics, and he has the mathematical sciences always in view. For him the knowledge which is "scientific" lies between mere belief, or uncriticised opinion, and the supreme knowledge which sees all the facts in the light of the highest principle. Science, therefore, to Plato represents a real but an incomplete form of knowledge, inasmuch

<sup>1</sup> Rep., vii. 533, C.; Sympos., 210, C.

The 'Philebus' marks a stage of Plato's thought considerably later than the 'Republic,' but the view of dialectic is substantially the same.—'Phileb.,' 58.

as it does not dialectically deduce the postulates from which it sets out.<sup>1</sup> Or as we might put it in the language of our own day, science is an advance on the common consciousness, but it makes assumptions which philosophy must revise and correct from the higher standpoint of system.

With Aristotle we note the beginning of a division of knowledge into special disciplines. The Aristotelian system falls into two parts, theoretical and practical; and the *θεωρητικάί ἐπιστημαί* are divided into Mathematics, Physics, and Metaphysics or Theology. But, as we might expect from his method and point of view, the special sciences have a more independent value for Aristotle than for Plato. In contrast to philosophy they are occupied with a particular phase or aspect of reality.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Aristotle makes no sharp distinction between the special sciences and philosophy. For the latter is simply the most general and so the central science, and deals with the first principles of reality as such.<sup>3</sup> The special sciences investigate grounds or causes in a limited sphere, while Metaphysics goes back to the ultimate grounds of all things. The distinction is not one of method but of scope. It should also be said, that neither for Plato nor Aristotle does the religious

<sup>1</sup> Rep., vi. 510. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Meta., iv. 1. 1, and vi. 1. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Meta., i. 2, and xi. 3. 1.

view of the world have any validity apart from the philosophic.

The close relation with First Philosophy into which Aristotle brought the special sciences was less difficult then, in view of the slender development of the latter. But when the progress in this direction made afterwards in Greece was continued with marvellous success in modern times, the problem became vastly harder. The natural sciences, having gained their independence, set to work with a will; and they have amassed a great body of detailed knowledge in various departments, which it becomes ever less easy to organise into a systematic whole. The scientific field has been divided and subdivided, and the individual investigator has usually neither time nor interest to discuss the wider bearings of the special knowledge with which he deals. The philosopher, however, cannot evade the duty of giving some general pronouncement on the meaning and value of the knowledge supplied by the particular sciences. Or at least he cannot do so without abandoning the claim to be 'synoptic' in the sense of Plato. For the modern world the 'Critique' of Kant set this problem in a new light. The radical result of Kantian criticism, embodied in the principle that "the understanding makes nature," was to pronounce the accumulated knowledge of the external universe to be phenomenal merely. Beyond

the lower realm in which the understanding moves, above the region of things in space and time, lies a real world; but its portals are for ever barred, alike to the man of science and the speculative inquirer. In this supersensuous world faith finds God, Freedom, and Immortality. But it was a dubious boon to religion to deliver it from the assaults of the materialist and the sceptic at the expense of making it theoretically unintelligible. Nor could the scientific mind, so fruitful in practical results, feel reconciled to a criticism which cut the ground from beneath it, and refused to assign to its work any definite degree of reality in the ultimate constitution of things.

To fill up the chasm left by the Kantian criticism, and to rethink experience in a more thorough way, became an urgent task. Hegel sought to do so by abandoning altogether the notion of 'things in themselves,' and by treating reason as one and continuous through all the stages of its development from mere immediacy of consciousness,—pure being—to absolute self-consciousness,—perfect Reality. Broadly speaking, the work of Hegel was to interpret the universe as an evolution, whose stages are stages in the development of self-consciousness or reason. Accordingly the standpoint of science represents a level of development above that of the ordinary consciousness but below that of philosophy.

The similarity to Plato is thus apparent. Hegel's view of science is at all events more satisfactory than that of Kant, for he allows to it a definite degree of reality and a value in the larger system of experience. And it had the undoubted merit of bringing into relief the truth that science proceeds by abstraction; it concentrates attention upon a special aspect of reality and neglects the rest. On the other hand, few or none will now admit that thought has succeeded in rising to the absolute point of view, and has given the final reinterpretation of the results of science. Hegel's own efforts to apply the dialectic to nature were by no means happy. In fact, the scientific investigation of nature is still so incomplete that the present-day thinker, with a better intellectual perspective, refrains from publishing a 'Naturphilosophie.' Our valuation of the sciences must to some extent be provisional, and cannot go beyond certain broad statements.

We may take it, however, that Modern Idealism has made it clear that the natural sciences are abstract in their point of view, therefore partial in their explanations. They take the objects of outer experience as given, they raise no questions how they come to be given. Yet a fact of outer experience implies concepts as well as percepts in space and time. Apart from the activity of conscious

subjects, the object in presentation would not be what it is. With the purpose it has in view natural science rightly neglects the ideal aspect of experience, but in so doing it inevitably sacrifices completeness of interpretation. Accepting, then, reality as given, the objective sciences restrict themselves almost entirely to the mechanical standpoint in dealing with it. They are engaged in determining the quantitative relations of things ; of their qualitative differences they have little to say. The sensation of violet is qualitatively distinct from that of red ; but optics, in tracing the distinction to a difference of length in the respective light-waves of violet and red, furnishes an explanation which, if important, is obviously incomplete. Why this particular light-wave should give this particular quality of sensation we do not learn.

In general the method of the Natural Sciences is to establish a connection between things by the principle of causality. They endeavour to transform what at first seem isolated events into a connected series, and in this way they seek to show that experience is rational. To know what precedes and what succeeds a certain fact is practically important ; but it is, even from the standpoint of science, meagre and one-sided as an explanation. Reflexion shows that elements in the background are also indispensable to the effect. So, as a more com-

plete statement, science interprets an event through an assemblage of causes. But the result is to show that a perfectly adequate statement of the total grounds of any event is not attainable. Indeed the full presentation of the conditions of an effect would involve the statement of the effect itself, as in turn conditioning the action of its causes. Science, however, cuts this perplexing knot; and in practice it works well by explaining an event through its more prominent, or, for the specific purpose, its more important, conditions.

Nevertheless when science, though refusing to go beyond the mechanical point of view, bids us recognise the eternal necessity of 'laws of nature,' we pause and ask why. For if we incautiously accept the statement as a major premiss, we may be afterwards presented with the inference that causal initiative, human or divine, is a fiction. There is no place, it is urged, for such effects in the strictly determined order of nature. The expression 'law of nature' is of course anthropomorphic. And analogy must not lead us to regard such laws as having a validity beyond the particular facts in which they are realised. No natural law can be deduced *a priori* in the Kantian sense. It neither of itself creates the facts which exemplify it, nor shows why they come to be. A 'law of nature,' as in chemistry, is often no more than a



quantitative formula which states the proportions in which elements unite to form new products. That sixteen parts by weight of oxygen unite with two parts of hydrogen to form water is true as a fact but meagre as an explanation. That gravity as a force varies with the mass, and inversely, as the square of the distance, describes how bodies act under certain conditions and no more. Laws are generalised expressions of the behaviour of things, and they are without significance apart from the things. Their ultimate meaning depends on the inner nature of the things of which they are the expression. In fact, the idea of a 'law of nature' seems, under examination, to sink back into the more general principle that nature is uniform. In other words, the things and elements in nature act on and respond to one another in uniform ways, so that experience is continuous, the present harmonises with the past, and the logical movement of thought is in correspondence with the outward order of events. The scientific notion of necessity, like that of law and causality, is not a principle which imposes itself on facts and rules them by some superior right. It can only find what warrant it has in the inner constitution of the facts themselves. And, from its mechanical standpoint, Natural Science is obviously unable to solve this problem.

The jurisdiction of Natural Science is thus limited. Without going beyond its province it cannot sit in judgment on the spiritual side of experience. On the other hand, Ethics and Religion are alike concerned to maintain that the mechanical view of nature is not final, that it can and ought to be supplemented. For both presuppose that the world of outer experience subserves moral and spiritual ends. Does nature itself lend any countenance to the contention that the standpoint of mechanism must be transcended? This at least we know, that to explain mechanically is to explain inadequately. Do the facts, then, demand a teleological interpretation? The old argument which demonstrated everywhere the hand of an external designer is discredited, and it is seldom urged now. And one may admit that Bacon's protest against explanation by final causes, on the part of science, was sound advice against confusing two different standpoints.<sup>1</sup> Yet nature itself, in setting before us the varied phenomena of life, puts in a plea for teleology. The relation of the parts in an organic body visibly calls for a way of regarding them which is higher than mechanical. For we find here a grouping and co-ordination of elements into a whole, which we

<sup>1</sup> ("Causæ finales) quæ sunt plane ex natura hominis potius quam universi, atque ex hoc fonte philosophiam miris modis corruperunt." — 'Nov. Org.,' 49.

make intelligible to ourselves through the notion of means and end. To Aristotle it seemed that the idea of the whole, or complete organism, was the presupposition and final cause ( $\tauὸ οὐ ἕνεκα$ ) of the arrangement and growth of the parts. His conception of an immanent teleology has been a fruitful one, and it has not lost its value. We cannot ignore the fact that in nature, in the sphere where mechanical explanations prevail, complex products appear in which external causality has been converted into a systematic connexion of parts, so that each part is determined in meaning and function by the whole. If, then, within the realm of nature, forms of unity which are determined by an end are present beyond dispute, can we draw any inference as to the constitution of the world in which these forms appear? The inorganic elements we know are made subservient to the life-process, they are converted into means to an end. This would be impossible, were these elements in their inner character not susceptible of a connexion which is more than mechanical. If the material world were only a vast series of externally related things with no inward unity, the continuous process of life within it would be a hopeless puzzle. The nature which constantly ministers to that which is clearly teleological must, in some sense, be a whole pervaded by the principle of end.

The mechanical method is an abstract and, for practical purposes, highly convenient way of interpreting nature. Mechanism has its value as an aspect of a more concrete point of view; and that within its limits it is valid the discoveries of science attest. It only becomes false when it asserts its own sufficiency. The mechanism of the organ is implied in the production of the fugue which is played upon it. But it would be ridiculous to say that it explains the musical meaning of the piece as a harmonious whole.

When we pass from the domain of nature to that of consciousness, the futility of a merely mechanical interpretation is transparent. The point has been so often and so effectively insisted on that we do not feel called upon to urge it here. Nor does the notion of psycho-physical parallelism, or the view of mind as an epiphenomenon, offer any real explanation of the nature and origin of consciousness.<sup>1</sup> If an organic world supervenes on a mechanical system, and if life in turn blossoms into conscious selves which think, feel, and will, and invest experience with meaning and value, we must construe the beginning in the light of the rich result. The *ἐνέργεια* interprets the *δύναμις*, and not *vice versa*. The deeper and more complete interpretation of reality will be spiritual, and

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, caps. 11 and 12.

what seems lowest must have some affinity with spirit. The procedure of natural scientists to some extent supports this contention, for they find it necessary to idealise "matter" to fit it for the rôle it has to play.

"*Natura non facit saltum*" was once a favourite motto with physicists, and Leibniz gave a higher turn to the principle when he declared experience to be continuous through all its grades. It is of value to remember that no phase of experience is isolated, but each derives meaning from its relation to other phases. And so it would be overstraining the point to say that the ethical world represents a complete break in the chain of development. In the region of instinctive behaviour, in the unconscious but purposive selection of what conserves the life of the individual and the species, it may be conceded there is a dim forecast of the higher realm of moral conduct. For morality is also action which conduces to the wellbeing of the individual and race, and the customs and laws of primitive society were developments which ministered to the conservation of the social whole. And while with the deepening of self-consciousness, and the growth of personal character, these laws gradually take a higher and more distinctly ethical character, it is still true that we cannot fix a point and say that there is here a break in the continuity of the

process. The danger is that a false inference may be drawn from the principle of continuity. For if you assume that you have got a complete explanation of the facts on a lower level, and then suppose that the same explanation must hold at a higher level, you are likely enough to go astray. The abstract principles of mechanism, for instance, give a useful interpretation of natural phenomena: apply them to spiritual phenomena, and they are notoriously insufficient. In the same way the self-regarding instinct may be helpful in shedding light on biological facts; but make it the universal law of action, and by it explain all civic virtue and moral heroism, and your principle breaks down. The truth would seem to be that such generalisations, even in the lower sphere, are not perfect and exhaustive, but their inadequacy becomes palpable in the higher. Hence it seems to me that the continuity of the ethical and spiritual life of man with lower levels of being, instead of suggesting an interpretation of the higher by the lower, should warn us that the explanations which will work at the lower level are really incomplete.

It is undoubted that man as a personal and ethical being stands in marked contrast to the merely natural order of things. Though personality be gradually evolved, it none the less marks

a distinctive stage of world-development. And first and foremost, in the moral world the difference between what *is* and what *ought to be* has come to decisive expression. Man does not confine his judgment to mere facts. Over against fact he sets up the notion of value, and declares that the good which is not here and now, ought to be. The idea of moral obligation is the great obstacle to the satisfactory treatment of Ethics from the strictly scientific point of view. Up to a point, indeed, such a line of treatment may be followed, but only up to a point; and in the end we cannot get quit of the fact that Ethics is a normative science. It is not merely descriptive; it prescribes rules of conduct and sets forth what ought to be.

All conduct, as Aristotle has told us, is directed to some end or good: moral conduct is so directed consciously and of choice. It is necessary, however, to distinguish the immanent teleology which exists in nature from the teleology of moral action. In the former we have the whole determining the interaction of its elements and developing itself through it. The final end is thus the complementary notion to that of causality. In the one case we go from the parts to the whole, in the other from the whole to the parts. And so, we may remark in passing, we cannot hold with Kant

that cause is constitutive, but the end only regulative. For the end is the more complete statement of what is involved in the cause. But here we cannot speak of the end being a motive to the parts, nor is there any contrast implied between a higher and a lower end. The particular quality which attaches to the word *ought* is wanting. Or, what is the same thing, moral growth is not a movement determined from point to point by the completed result. An end which thus dominates the process of development is not an ethical end, and though you might speak of it as that which *has* to be, you could not speak of it as that which *ought* to be. In other words man selects his ends, chooses between them, and determines himself. Moral obligation rests on the freedom of the subject; remove this, and obligation sinks to non-moral constraint. I suppose that most people will agree that moral conduct presupposes some kind of freedom, and that there is a sense in which such conduct is not mechanically determined. But nevertheless there is disagreement as to what exactly is signified by freedom. And even though the question is an old one, it may be well to examine it.

The Natural Sciences, we may take it, cannot disprove freedom. For, on the one hand, they cannot show that the mechanical point of view is



applicable to the spiritual world : and, on the other hand, they do not prove that nature itself is satisfactorily explained from the standpoint of mechanism. Hence they have no title to insist that nature is a strictly determined whole which excludes the free realisation of moral ends within it. As Science, then, is not in a position to oppose a *non possumus* to the claim for freedom, the validity of the claim must be judged on other grounds. And to begin with, it is highly significant that the claim should be made. Those who deny freedom ought to explain why we act, and cannot help acting, under the idea of freedom. "Paradoxical as it may appear," says Prof. Ward, "even the illusion of activity and spontaneity is certain evidence that activity and spontaneity somehow exist." And certainly if man were only a conscious automaton, it does not seem possible to offer any plausible reason why he should even imagine himself free.

The most ordinary analysis will show that there is that in moral action which differentiates it qualitatively from mechanical process. Between the stimuli A, B, C, and the acts which correspond to them—X, Y, Z—there intervenes the conscious subject S. And the fact that A, B, and C can only become motives by losing their externality and forming part of the living content of S, this

constitutes the difference between compulsion and self-determination, as Aristotle pointed out.<sup>1</sup> Man, as has often been said, is free, because he is not externally determined but determines himself.

It is, however, apparent that the idea of self-determination may cover two distinct conceptions of personal freedom. In the one case, where there are alternatives before the individual, he chooses between them, and while he selects one it was possible for him to select the other. This we may call the freedom of the real alternative. In the other case he chooses, but his whole character is expressed in the choice, and of acts that seem alternative only one is consistent with the self. A man's character determines his action, but as character is just the self as it has come to be qualified, we can still say he is self-determined and therefore free. It is of importance to the interpretation of the religious consciousness that we should decide, if possible, which of these views is to be accepted. For the way we regard moral evil, and the manner in which we construe the act of faith, will depend on the kind of freedom we take to be true.

Now it must be frankly admitted that some considerations tell in favour of what we may call

<sup>1</sup> Eth. Nic., iii. 1. Βίαιον δὲ οὐ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἔξωθεν, τοιαύτη οὖσα ἐν ᾧ μηδὲν συμβάλλεται ὁ πρᾶττων ἢ ὁ πάσχων.

spiritual determinism, and it has commended itself to many philosophical thinkers. If choice is absolutely indifferent, it is hardly moral; and in practical life we do not suppose S to be just as likely to choose A as B. Moral valuation goes on the assumption that acts are somehow the outcome of character expressed in desire. And experience of men serves to show that there is very little which is arbitrary in human conduct. Moreover, against those who maintain a real contingency of choice, it is contended that this means the introduction of a fictitious pure self which is without content; and so the vital nerve is cut which binds the character to the act of the agent, and makes him responsible. Still, when all is said, spiritual determinism raises grave difficulties, although those who advocate it are not always willing to allow this. The difficulties come out in the facts of remorse and repentance. We are here confronted with the dilemma that, if the acts repented of are not connected with the character of the agent, they are not really his and he cannot truly regret them. On the other hand, there would be no cause for regret if the individual *could* not have acted otherwise. Repentance, to the determinist, is an illusion engendered by a discord between a man's present emotional condition and his condition when he did the deed. The interpretation, it must be said, is

not credible. A similar difficulty confronts the spiritual determinist in dealing with the fact of a moral reformation in the individual history. In his view the self-conscious principle in man has transformed the natural desires and dispositions into a moral character. Between the present and past of this character there is a necessary connexion, and each new act is an outcome of the past and becomes a condition of the future. How, then, does man draw from the past the will to reform himself in the present? The late Prof. Green has suggested as an explanation that a man's past conduct may have been determined by "a conception of personal good" which has failed to bring satisfaction, and his attitude may be one of "conscious revulsion from it."<sup>1</sup> True; but the self which thus reacts against the past is not the determinate outcome of the past. The present reaction of the self is not intelligible apart from the past. Yet the self which the past has failed to satisfy cannot fairly represent the whole character developed in the past. Else why the revulsion?

We may find some help in this difficulty by considering more closely the relation of the self to character. The self which stands for the person with his history, his interests, ideals, is an ideal construction, not a fact immediately given. Here

<sup>1</sup> Prolegomena to Ethics, p. 115.

the self includes the character it has developed in time. But behind the ideally constructed self there is the self which is the basis of memory, recognition, and continuity of interest. Ideal construction without an active centre which constructs and is referred to does not seem possible. On the other hand, the character which is related to and owned by the fundamental self is not a perfectly coherent and organic whole. It is formed gradually out of unharmonised natural tendencies, dispositions, and desires, as the self works itself free from mere impulse and comes to fuller consciousness of itself. The inner life is, to use a figure, composed of different strata at different levels, and some of these may commonly fall within the focus of consciousness while others lie more usually in the subconscious region. The self in its development from the material to the spiritual has to construct from these a consistent whole of character. A fallacy seems to lurk in the ordinary assertion that action is necessarily determined by character, for, in point of fact, man in his temporal history has never unified his character so completely as to exclude the possibility of a real alternative in conduct. Every moral act is related to an aspect of a man's character, else we should not commend him or condemn him for it, and he himself would not be conscious of self-approval or repentance.

But all acts are not equally characteristic. We remark, for instance, of an act which springs directly from the main current of an individual's interest and effort, that it was "So like him." Of another act we say that it was "So unlike him," implying that it proceeds from a more obscure and less active aspect of his inner life. The truth seems to be that the self as will which determines to action can take up into the content of its will different conceptions of the self as object. These conceptions may not harmonise, though all are potentially capable of more or less close relation to the self which wills, for they have had a place in the development of the inner life. And a true liberty to choose between them is not inconsistent with a constant relation of character and conduct, and it gives a real meaning to facts like repentance and moral obligation.

Freedom of moral choice has limits imposed on it by the inner life of the individual, for the moral act must always be related to that life. Before self-consciousness has developed the rude elements of character out of the natural desires, there is no responsible action. On the other hand, the character as it becomes more and more unified and consolidated, as it is drawn into more close organic relation to the self which wills, so does it leave less scope for the alternative in action. As a man becomes thoroughly bad, his power to choose the good

diminishes: and the more disciplined we are in the life of virtue, the less does evil appeal to us. In general, the more fully and consistently we take up a conception of self into the principles of our will, the more we lessen the possibility of developing an alternative conception. Hence the larger and ideal meaning which has been attached to freedom. In this sense freedom denotes the fullest and most harmonious development of human powers, —a state in which goodness is the immanent law of life, and evil has ceased altogether to be a motive. This of course is an ideal which in temporal experience is not attained; all that the individual can hope for is to make progress towards it. The important point is that man's path to this higher freedom is by the real exercise of his choice, and the journey is significant and testing because of the alternatives which open out before the wayfarer. For the *ideal* freedom postulates a *real* freedom to realise it.

We have so far discussed the problem of freedom from the individual point of view, but we are fully aware that the question has a social aspect. Behind the inner life of the individual, and fostering its growth, is the larger life of the society to which he belongs. The nature of the alternatives which are possible to him is conditioned by the stage of social progress and the character of his social environment.

The virtue and vice of the savage are not those of the civilised man, and the points where moral choice was most urgently necessary were not the same in mediæval as in modern times. Again, the full fruition of human capacities is not possible in isolation: man only finds scope and exercise for his powers in interaction with others. So we could not conceive that an individual should attain to perfect freedom apart from a perfected society. It is true, indeed, that some men have been remarkably in advance of their age and environment. Still there are boundaries which even genius cannot overpass. Shakespeare could not have appeared in the age of Dante, nor Isaiah among the Athenian contemporaries of Socrates. The highest civic, moral, or artistic powers cannot come to full and harmonious utterance in a rude, lawless, or decadent society. For though these capacities be latent in a man, there is neither a sympathetic medium to elicit them nor a free field for their exercise. The inner development of the individual, therefore, is historically and socially conditioned. And the advance to the higher freedom is a historic process, in which society and individuals act and react one on another. The development of this ideal must, then, be studied historically, and to this aspect of ethical development we now turn.

Man is by nature a *πολιτικὸν ζῶον* as Aristotle



said, and morality is social in its origin. Ethics coming from *ἦθος* and morals from *mores*, point to the ancestry of moral ideas in customs. The study of the subject from the evolutionary standpoint dispels the illusion that, from the first, morality was a separate province of life presided over by a special 'faculty.' If we go back to the tribe,—and we cannot go further,—primitive ethics are there represented simply by tribal customs. The norm of conduct is the traditional usage or unwritten law of the tribe, and conformity with this law is the rudimentary expression of what ought to be. Fear of punishment human or divine ensuing on breach of the custom, is the earliest phase of conscience. At this level of culture personality is undeveloped, and the social whole is all-important. Spiritual life is hampered by material conditions, and there is no independent growth of the inner nature. Hence we find a lack of specific character in the products of the primitive mind. There is a certain monotony in early myth, custom, and religion, and the same circle of ideas recurs among many races. And the development of personal character is restricted by the narrow range of possible motives. Man's gradual triumph over natural impediments, and his advance from savagery to civilisation, are primarily due to the pressure of spiritual life within him. In the course of develop-

ment the inner life deepens and defines itself *pari passu* with the growth of social organisation. A cardinal point in that history, regarded objectively, is the transition from the tribe to the nation as social whole. To the outer expansion correspond an inner concentration and advance in self-consciousness which make possible the rôle of law-giver, prophet, and reformer. The inward disposition now receives a value over against external acts. By - and - by legal enactments and ancient usages are supplemented by the thought of "unwritten laws," of larger scope and more divine authority. So the human end is defined in terms of law, which is the 'custom' of the olden time idealised and made universal. To the Hebrew prophet this end was obedience to the law of the Covenant - God, written on "fleshly tables of the heart." To the Greek thinker it was participation in that immanent justice which is the "bond of perfectness" in society.

The growing consciousness of the worth of the subjective side of morality paved the way for that distinction between ethics and politics which was made after Aristotle. It is a development of this tendency which, in modern times, has prompted the effort to determine morality by conscience and to value conduct simply by motives. Conscience, said Bishop Butler, is "the rule of right within"; the

one unconditional moral good, said Kant, is "a good will." We sympathise with these views as a protest against an external utilitarianism, but the rigid exclusion of results from the valuation of conduct is not possible. The motive and the consequences of an act must both enter into a full appreciation of it. In practice we should disapprove of actions done with the best intent, but the results of which the doer had ample opportunity of seeing to be socially demoralising. And our disapproval of the acts would mean a disapproval of the character from which they proceeded. The historic and evolutionary methods of the nineteenth century have served to correct a one-sided stress on the subjective side of morality. The essential interdependence of society and individuals, revealed in their common growth, has been insisted on. The good for the individual is recognised to be a common good, and subjective approval must in the last resort be based on this good. From the school of scientific evolution we have the chief good described as "social health," or "general increase of life." These definitions at least imply that valuation must be in terms of the ethical end, and that this end is social as well as individual. As definitions, however, they must be reckoned partial and one-sided. In fact, the ethical end must be regarded not only as a common end but as ideal,

if we are to do justice to the inner life which is the source of moral values. In other words, the perfection which is the ethical end is an ideal which transcends present attainment, and implies a perfected social system as its condition. This corresponds to the higher freedom already referred to,—the actualisation of all capacities for good in the individual in and through a society which makes this possible. A school of English ethical writers has termed this ideal self-realisation, and the phrase can be commended on several grounds. For it keeps in view the fact that the highest value must be something personal. If a social system is good, it is because the good has its living centre in the personal beings who make up the system. Ethical goodness has a reference in the last resort to persons, and the fact is kept in mind when we speak of it as a realisation of the self. Again this designation of the ideal does justice to the truth that the development is in and through a historical process. It is a making real in time what the self has in it to become through interaction with other selves. We progress to the ideal by the way of the better, but we cannot now give full content to it. Only through the process of development itself could we know how much there is in a fully realised self. The definition has the terseness and the general applicability which are needed in a definition of the ethical end.

Still there is an ambiguity in the phrase, as will be seen when we ask, What is the relation of the ideal self to the actual self? Plainly the self which has to be made real has not here and now come to the fulness of its utterance. It must be a larger self than the already existing self. Is this ideal self implicit in individual selves? the flower and fruit, as it were, while they are the germ? And is ethical progress a progress by which the ideal self works itself out through the historically given self by an inward course of development? If so, self-realisation would have a lower counterpart in organic growth. But there can be little doubt that it is not possible by this construction to do justice to the facts of the moral life. For the ideal self does not explain the real moral development of the individual in time, which is not continuous and consistent. To understand this we are thrown back on the self which determines itself to act, and in choice identifies itself with conceptions of self which are not always compatible. If we are to describe the moral life in time as a process of self-realisation, we must mean that the self which men are realising is a projected or future self. The self which is taken into the content of the will as end is not the complete and ideal self. It may be an idea of self lower than what we are. But if the act is morally good, it is a self better

than the existing self, and represents a value in excess of that already attained. The "ought" is ever reflected against the background of the present. Yet it is not, as we see it, an eternally fixed beacon-light but a luminous point which moves with the background against which it is projected. The better self which ought to be realised is conditioned by the self which is, and this in turn is largely influenced by the historical and racial environment in which it appears. Ideals, we all know, vary with individuals and races and epochs in history. Accordingly the end defined as self-realisation has a certain vagueness. We want, if possible, to know more about the kind of self which should be realised, that we may have some principle of appreciation to go on.

In these circumstances we are forced to ask, whether the idea of a supreme good, or perfectly realised self, is more than an abstract generalisation from the partial forms of good which have existed. It has not been shown, and it may not be possible to show in a convincing way, by a study of human progress, that the diverse ideals of various races and ages are slowly converging towards a central good. And at the best our survey of the evolution of experience is limited. But still it is a very unsatisfactory view that the supreme ideal is only a useful fiction, and has no

reality. For then there would be no reason why different men and races should not content themselves where they could with quite different conceptions of human good. And there could not be any sure conviction on the meaning of progress and the direction in which it lay. For there would be no goal by which to judge of movement. We seem driven to conclude that a Supreme Ideal must in some way be real, if the ends of conduct are to be co-ordinated, if partial ideals are to be transcended, and if the good is to grow from less to more. In what sense are we to say, then, that the ideal of a perfectly realised self is real? Here the student of Ethics is forced, whether he likes it or not, to enter the domain of metaphysics. Readers of Green's 'Prolegomena to Ethics' will remember that he found it necessary to postulate that the fully realised self was actual in the Eternal Consciousness or God.<sup>1</sup> And he endeavours to bring the ideal into an operative connexion with the historical process by his theory that the individual is in possibility what the Eternal Self is in actuality. Of God, Green remarks, "He is a Being in whom we exist," and "He is *all* we are capable of becoming." This is not the place to discuss the speculative difficulties in Green's doctrine of the relation of the Eternal to the in-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 196 ff.

dividual consciousness. But we must ask if it offers a satisfactory solution of the ethical problem involved. The difficulty lies in the connexion of the Eternal and Ideal Self, which is above development, with the development of the self in time. If the finite self knows itself in God to possess eternally the complete good it seeks in piecemeal fashion in time, this temporal development partakes of the nature of appearance and loses value in consequence. And if the eternally perfect Self is so intimately bound up with our self-consciousness, it does not seem clear what spiritual gain comes of the temporal efforts after a higher good, or why there should be such a circuitous process. But we may cling to the reality and value of the development in time. We may say that the perfectly realised self somehow exists in God, and is the final form of goodness, though it is differentiated from the self which wills the good in time. Then, if we hold to self-realisation as an absolute principle, it is hard to see how the separation of the two selves can be overcome. Between the temporal becoming of the self and its eternal goal inner identity, and so moral continuity, is wanting. For development presupposes incompleteness: and we cannot conceive a process of self-realisation issuing in a timeless and perfect self, which is bound by continuity of consciousness



and character to the self which wills the good in experience. That is to say, the self as active will cannot bridge the cleft between the real and the ideal, and freedom does not come as the fruition of moral endeavour.

The course of the argument thus seems to have brought us to a dilemma. We saw that if a final good or highest value did not exist, there was no trustworthy test of value or determination of progress. And yet, when we try to give an ultimate expression to the ethical end, we find ourselves entangled in contradictions. It seems to me that the only solution to this difficulty lies in the recognition that the ethical consciousness itself is not ultimate and must be transcended. Self-realisation as an *ethical* principle is not at fault. It is a good working idea of the ethical end, and up to a point satisfies the needs of a theory on the subject. It only becomes contradictory when we try to state it as an absolute principle of spiritual life. For no working out of the moral ideal brings man to the fulfilment of his destiny in the real universe. The Eternal and Perfect Self exists, but by no process of self-realisation can the individual become identical with it. The endeavour of the developing moral life comes to its goal not in the sphere of morality but in that of religion, and here spiritual life takes a new and

higher form. In communion with God, the Perfect Good, man finds, in principle at least, that completion of himself which by no effort of his own after the good has he been able to gain. The deeper drift of the moral life comes to light in religion, and through religion receives a satisfying meaning. God, as Plato noted, rather than man is the true measure of value.<sup>1</sup> And the religious consciousness is the final expression of a man's personal attitude to life.

From the formal point of view, then, Religion is the goal and completion of Ethics, and there is no antagonism between them. On the level of Ethics man seeks the satisfaction of the self by a process of realising the good in time. Religion does not nullify this process but transcends it. The satisfaction man seeks under the form of the moral life it gives, not in the way of personal achieved gain, but in the form of an inward completion and harmony wrought by union with God. It is true, as we pointed out before, that in the historical evolution of Ethics and Religion the content of the moral consciousness has sometimes been at discord with the content of the religious consciousness. But such antagonism is temporary: it is not grounded in the nature of things, and has been useful in bringing about a more harmonious

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 716 c.

relationship. And there can be no doubt that in the course of development the moral consciousness has powerfully influenced religion. For while religion fostered the ethical virtues by acting as a social bond, the ethical spirit in turn reacted on religion, and purified and elevated it. The growing perception of moral values on earth gave man a nobler conception of the things in heaven. The object of faith in every higher religion is qualified by ethical predicates. Yet morality is not the basis of religion, since it really presupposes it. For man would not be moral if he had it not in him to be more than moral. The pursuit of ends entails a final end, and appreciation of value rests on a Supreme Value. But in the region of moral endeavour the ideal is elusive and fades,

“For ever and for ever when we move.”

The fact that man follows and follows vainly the fugitive ideal, is a token that he is somehow capable of the satisfaction for which he yearns. He condemns the good he has realised as partial because he feels the contact and appeal of the Good which is complete. And if he is conscious of failure to gain the larger freedom by his own endeavour, it is because he has had a foretaste of the freedom which comes through obedience.

The transition of the ethical into the religious

consciousness is a movement from a narrower to a larger and more concrete point of view. Religion is the expression of a practical relation to experience and its ground. This relation is established by faith, and faith is the utterance of the free spirit within. Our religious faith is just the personal affirmation of the ultimate meaning life has for us. The soul which temporal experience cannot satisfy declares that there is a Being who can satisfy its deepest needs. So religion is the personal expression of human trust in a Reality behind the changing world of experience, a reality at once the source and end of all partial good. Man rises in faith above the strife and limitation of a world where the good develops painfully, and here and now realises in some degree that his broken and fragmentary life is being harmonised and completed by the indwelling Life of God.

The psychological motives to religion, as we shall see afterwards, are complex. But they all involve the principle that man is a limited and dependent being, who yet seeks more than he can find within himself. Were men "Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark," they would never be religious. An inner need impels man to religion, and faith posits the object to supply the need. Here we have not intellectual inference, but the

more insistent logic of the inner life. The universality of religion is a testimony that the need which is expressed by faith is a normal outcome of human nature. Still, it has often been regarded as a weakness that the attitude of the religious consciousness to its object should be one of faith rather than reason. In this respect religion, it is said, is at a disadvantage compared with the Natural Sciences and Ethics which are based on the stable foundation of reason. But this is to overstate the case to the disadvantage of religion; for the Natural Sciences and Ethics also involve faith, if perhaps not so obviously. The man of science, for example, trusts the principles on which he works, but the field in which he can apply them, and the test to which he can put them, are restricted. And with the ampler evolution of experience they may require modification in the future, just as the modern investigator has revised the principles on which primitive man interpreted nature. The scientific man believes that the particular connexion he establishes between elements, and the 'laws' he finds in nature, will be valid of experience distant in time and place from his own. Yet he could not make this good by logical proof. A perfect guarantee of his generalisations could only be attained by a rational insight into experience as an inclusive and systematic whole, which determines

the development of its parts. Needless to say, the man of science has no such insight. And though his belief in his explanations may have excellent practical justification, this only helps to show that it contains an element of faith.

In the region of Ethics faith even more plainly plays a part. Those moral ideals which grow out of the inner life of men are no purely intellectual creations, nor do we believe in them on rational grounds simply. Indeed we could not think them out in clear and detailed form, and we only realise gradually their meaning as we progress towards them. We have faith in their reality and value, but we could not prove these. The appeal of the 'ought' to the will of man as embodying a value he has not yet, must always contain a demand on his faith. The truth is that faith and reason both issue out of the personal life of man and develop with personal development, and neither is altogether separated from the other. Faith certainly cannot be held to exclude thought. When it is used in the lower sense of supposition, the mere opinion (*δόξα*) of Plato, it is largely, if not entirely, an imperfectly developed intellectual process. And even that more definitely and intimately personal faith which is the expression of emotional and practical demands, can only attain clearness and generality by connecting itself with ideas which

are given through the intellect. But its distinguishing feature is that it is personal at the core, and has its stronghold in the emotions and the will; and to this we can trace that characteristic of faith in virtue of which it often continues to affirm the reality of its postulate even against the verdict of reason. Thought, again, seeks to present a larger and connected view of things, and it tries to exclude the subjective and emotional element from its working. But it develops on a personal basis, and it never succeeds in becoming strictly impersonal. The operation of thought, moreover, is always incomplete. It has to begin somewhere and to assume something, but it can never come back on its beginnings and take them up into an all-inclusive whole. Hence reason can never absolutely justify its conceptions on grounds of reason. Thought is supplemented by an act of faith which justifies a conception on grounds of value. And the value-judgment springs from the inner personal life, and we cannot reduce it to the theoretical judgment, though there cannot ultimately be a dualism between them.

If this view be correct, the prominence of faith in religion is not a token of special defect. The range of faith is wide, and reason cannot take over its office. And it belongs to the psychological nature of religion that the intellectual element

should not be so dominant in it as is the case with philosophy.

The function of faith in religion will become plainer to us, if we keep in mind that the mere desire for explanation could not of itself beget religion. Piety would be unmeaning in a purely intellectual being. The restless endeavour of the will, the pressure of emotional need as well as the thoughts which "wander through eternity," are all active in creating the demand for an object which can satisfy and harmonise the inner life. Hence no intellectual conception can exhaust the significance of the object of religious faith. To the piously disposed a philosophic notion of the Infinite is a stone rather than bread. In view of what the object of faith does and means for those who are religious, we must also conceive it in terms of value—as a highest value which gives order and meaning to the partial values realised in the life of the individual and the race. That the spirit of man, which seeks support and satisfaction in communion with an unseen object, finds what it seeks, is, in some degree, an evidence that faith does not fall down before a phantom of its own creation but establishes contact with reality.

Religion, although its aim is not theoretical, yet as it postulates a highest value which completes and harmonises the personal life, involves a *Welt-*



*anschauung*. Like philosophy it presents us with a view of the world as a whole, and so furnishes a wider outlook than either Science or Ethics. That outlook is primarily an appreciation, a judgment of facts in terms of a central value. To the religious man as such, scientific explanations are of minor interest; he rather considers whither things tend and what their worth is in relation to the perfect good. Life unrolls before him as a system of ends, which have meaning and coherence by reference to a supreme End. So the world becomes a graduated order seen *sub specie boni*. Yet it is not true to say, as some do, that the religious consciousness moves entirely on the lines of the value-judgment. For the religious man must think as well as feel and will, and the kingdom of the soul cannot be at peace if thought is in rebellion. So he cannot help regarding his highest value as somehow satisfying thought and explaining what exists. He derives the world from God, the Supreme Good. But the religious mind, we repeat, is not interested in finding significance in things through their complex relations to one another. It neglects the intermediate links, and construes nature and life by the final purpose which is being wrought out in them. But inasmuch as it does this, religion involves a synthesis which gives meaning to reality. In the more developed re-

ligions, which have expanded into systems of theology, considerable emphasis is frequently laid on the fact that they explain things, and up to a point at least satisfy the demands of the intellect. Nevertheless religion neither does nor can identify itself fully with the standpoint of intellectualism. It will not embark on a thorough criticism of its own postulates, and pleads the necessity of faith. It refuses to admit that the world of values can be reduced to categories of thought. The stronghold of religion is personal experience, and this experience is richer than any satisfaction of the intellect. "Our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee," cried Augustine, who had found neither the pleasures of life nor philosophy satisfying. "Pectus theologum facit," said a school of later divines, thus giving their testimony that spiritual life is the true fountain of profitable doctrine.

Still religion does not utter the last word on things human and divine. Thought with its "obstinate questionings" refuses quietly to merge itself in faith. For problems are left confronting us which do not admit of solution from the purely religious point of view. The world of facts and the world of values remain apart from one another, and an inner bond between them has not been established. That they fall within experience we know, and we judge now from the one point of

view and again from the other. But how there is continuity of development between fact and value, so that both form valid and consistent aspects of the organised whole of experience, is not clear. The question thrusts itself upon us, and religion cannot answer it. And further, we find the problem of religious value complicated by the fact that religions differ, and so do their scales of value. The religious good, for example, as the Hindu conceives it, is curiously unlike that of a European Christian, and so the goods which are a means are likewise regarded differently. With varying notions of value before us, we have to ask ourselves, Is there any common standard of appreciation? Is there a normal human nature whose value-experiences are regulative? Or can we by reflecting on the development of the religious consciousness, and on the historic forms in which it is embodied, bring to light an ideal of religion by which we can determine the relative worth of different religions? Then there is another and related problem which calls for discussion. Religion, if an important aspect of culture, is still only one aspect. How are we to conceive its relation to the other aspects? By a study of the respective processes we can try, as we have done, to show how it relates itself to, and contrasts itself with, Ethics and Science. In a like way one might discuss the relation of religion to Art. The results

of such discussions cannot, however, be final, as our point of view has been partial. While the study of the parts should precede the whole, yet the full meaning of the parts can only be determined in the light of the whole. So it would seem that the ultimate significance of religion and its function in culture can only be appreciated by the mind which sees the different aspects of experience together.

To deal fully with the problems raised by religion we must, therefore, go beyond the purely religious point of view. They can only be properly treated by a Philosophy of Religion. And the latter again will be determined in its method and point of view by general Philosophy. At present, however, it will be widely admitted that Philosophy is not in a position to synthesise and explain the whole of experience by a universal principle. The matter to be explained has become vast and complex, and between the general principles with which Philosophy works and the world of particular facts, there is for us a breach of continuity. Similarly, between the experience we designate 'mere fact' and the higher spiritual experiences of the individual, a line of immanent development has not been traced. But Philosophy, if it cannot unify all experience, at least helps us to understand the nature of the problem and the conditions under which a solution may be attempted. And it opens out general points of view

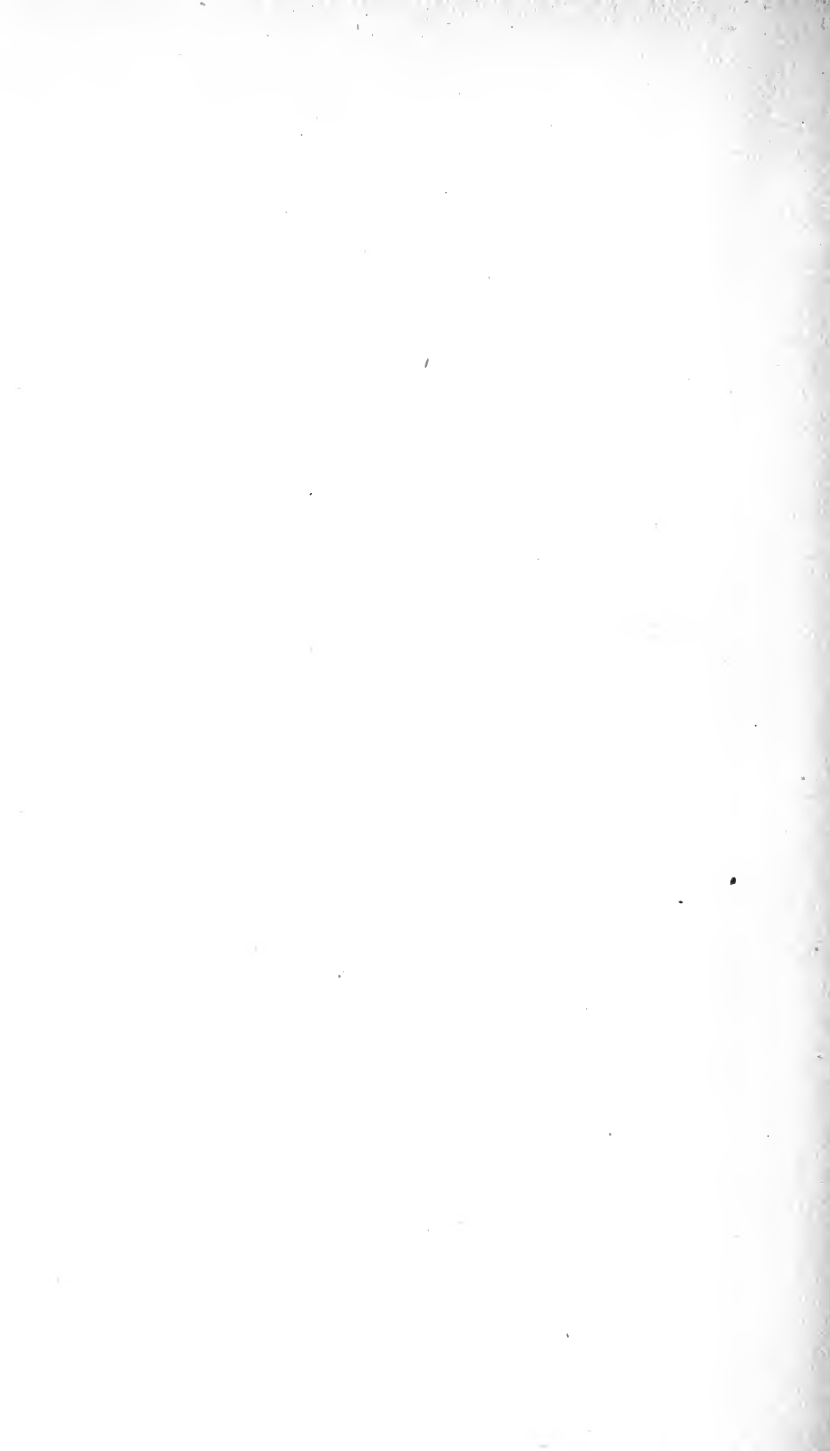
by which we can correct the onesidedness which clings to special sciences and phases of culture. It suggests, tentatively at all events, the standpoint from which the universe may be best regarded as a coherent whole. Hence the concluding word on the relations of Science, Ethics, and Religion falls to be spoken by Philosophy. Although that word be not ultimate, it represents the deepest insight of a particular stage of human culture.

The Philosophy of Religion, it may be added, distinguishes itself from general Philosophy mainly by its starting-point and method. The one begins with the part and tries to show its meaning in the whole; the other seeks to show how the whole includes the part. Philosophy deals with religion as an element falling within the synthesis of experience. Philosophy of Religion begins with the study of religious phenomena, in order to bring to light the essential principles. Hence it proceeds to show how these find a meaning and a place in the larger order of things. This is its point of contact with general Philosophy. But even though the latter fails to offer any adequate interpretation of all experience, the Philosophy of Religion may still perform an important office. It will discuss the origin and development of the religious consciousness, the psychological factors involved, as well as the function and value of religion in culture. And as the

outcome of this it will try to unfold the deeper meaning of religion. But the success of a Philosophy of Religion in attacking the latter problem must finally depend on the sufficiency of the point of view offered by Philosophy in the larger sense.

ESSAY III.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT:  
ITS HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION





### ESSAY III.

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THE present-day student who devotes himself to the History of Religion is oppressed by the wealth of material which lies before him. The investigations of the last century, pursued in the dispassionate spirit which befits science, have made a multitude of fresh facts available. Through the intricate and varied mass of phenomena set before him the student finds it no easy thing to thread his way, and reach a point where he can see general principles and state determinate conclusions. We might compare him to a man wandering in a vast forest, now overshadowed by great trees, now plunged into a rank undergrowth, and doubtful whether he will ever see the wood for the trees. The phenomena are so complex, and higher and lower elements are so often intermingled, that a logical arrangement of them must to some extent be arbitrary. Hence to accept Plato's rule and follow always the natural joints

in our divisions is, in the nature of the case, not practicable.<sup>1</sup> Tiele, one of the most competent workers in this field, finally contents himself with a broad classification of religions into Natural and Ethical. And even here there may be difference of opinion as to where the line should fall.

This difficulty then faces us when we turn to study the history of religion. The facts cannot naturally be compressed within a scheme of logical development. There is, indeed, a continuity in the growth of a religion, and no phase of it but has a meaning. Thought, however, is only one element in the religious consciousness, and does not suffice to control the evolution of religion by the principle of intellectual consistency. If we are to speak of the logic of religious evolution, it must be that larger logic which embraces the working of human needs, emotions, and desires.

The worker, then, in the field of religious phenomena has a complicated material to deal with, and he has to face the question of the method he will follow. He may decide to proceed on purely historic lines. He therefore endeavours above all to ascertain the facts, to present them accurately and group them as far as possible, but he avoids any comprehensive explanation of them. Such is the method adopted by Dr Tylor in his excellent

<sup>1</sup> Phædrus, 265, E.

book on 'Primitive Culture,' and it has given it a permanent value which does not belong to bolder but more imaginative works in the same field. But the careful sifting, arrangement, and presentation of materials only lay the foundation for further inquiry, and in themselves cannot satisfy the reason. To know the facts is necessary, but we also want to know the meaning of the facts: the *ὅτι*, in Aristotelian phrase, must become the *διότι*. Most people will admit that it is only when we go beyond merely empirical results, and discern law and connexion behind things, that we can duly appreciate their significance. The scientific spirit always refuses to regard phenomena, whether natural or historical, as isolated and independent. And the scientific historian, if he knows his business, tries to show how events and movements connect themselves with what has gone before and with what comes after. The student of religious development cannot be indifferent to the pressure of this demand; for even the domain of faith—the region *par excellence* of human hopes and fears—is not, after all, a fairyland where anything may be the result of anything. Still the elucidation of the early history of religion offers peculiar difficulties. It is not possible for the modern inquirer to grasp fully the condition of mind of primitive men. If it is difficult for the

mature man to enter into the mental world of childhood, it is harder for him to appreciate the psychological condition of his remotest ancestors. He is apt to forget this, and to interpret the savage mind too much through his own. But in a matter like this we cannot attain to more than probable, it may sometimes be highly probable, inference. And yet it is just an insight into the psychology of the primitive mind which is most important in interpreting the origin and growth of religious belief.

Again, at particular points we find ourselves hampered by evidence which lends itself to diverse inferences. Hence it is sometimes difficult to prevent subjective presuppositions from influencing the treatment of our materials. The cautious student will now and then have to leave points undecided in the interests of objective interpretation. And where more than one explanation is possible he will be careful not to press a particular theory further than the evidence warrants.<sup>1</sup>

What is the proper method to follow, it may be asked, in trying to understand the evolution of religion? The so-called *a priori* method does not

<sup>1</sup> As an example of this error one might instance the excessive importance attached to totemism by Mr Jevons, in his 'Introduction to the History of Religion,' or the ubiquitous part played by the spirit of vegetation in Mr Frazer's 'Golden Bough.'

find much favour in these days when there is a reaction against the bolder flights of speculation. The wealth and variety of material discourage the attempt to apply transcendental principles of explanation in the sphere of religious history. Such interpretations, when carried out, may be ingenious and perhaps at points suggestive, but they are artificial, and do not arise naturally out of a study of the phenomena. Nor is there, it seems to me, any gain in introducing scientific concepts, drawn from the domain of biology, into the history of religion for the purpose of interpretation. Terms like 'natural selection' and the 'survival of the fittest,' when applied to the rise and fall of religions, import misleading associations from a lower sphere into a higher. And they are useless as explanations of the transition from one form of religion to another.

Neither Metaphysics nor Science can help us here. Our key must be a psychological one; it must lie in the inner nature of man, from which religion everywhere proceeds. The mind of man, thinking, feeling, and willing, is the constant factor in religious history; and the stages and forms of spiritual development must in their characteristic features reflect the nature of the source from which they issue. So it seems to me that Höffding is entirely in the right when he insists that the true

method by which to study the growth of religion is the psychological-genetic method.<sup>1</sup> We shall be strengthened in this conviction when we remember that, while thought largely predominates in the development of science and philosophy, it is by no means so in religion. In the latter feeling and will play as large a part as the intellect, and they make their presence constantly felt in the evolution of religious belief. For example, in trying to understand the phenomena of religious progress and reform, survival and decadence, we must connect them, first of all, with the psychological elements which are at work in human nature. In this way we may find that what seems obscure and inconsistent in the evolution of religions becomes more intelligible by being brought into relation with one or other of the factors of the inner life.

Is the psychological interpretation of the religious development a final one? Some, no doubt, in these days when a certain distrust of metaphysical speculation is abroad, will be disposed to reply in the affirmative. Yet it is plain that, if we cannot go beyond the psychological meaning of religious experience, the whole question of the objective truth and validity of that experience is left in abeyance. The claim which every religion makes to be true urges us beyond the limits of a psychological

<sup>1</sup> Religionsphilosophie, pp. 123, 124.

inquiry. The final interpretation of religious evolution presupposes a determination of the idea of religion as well as an explanation of the ultimate meaning and ground of religious experience. Only in this way, and not from a purely psychological study, can we gain an objective standard of appreciation in dealing with religions. This task, of course, falls to a Philosophy of Religion, and it may be any solution we can give will be tentative and provisional. Still, a Philosophy of Religion, if it is to be true to its function, must deal with the problem, and its treatment will only be effective if it takes into consideration the psychological facts. This will be the best guarantee that the theory it offers is neither fanciful nor one-sided. Our aim in the present essay is a limited one, and does not go beyond an attempt to interpret psychologically the development of religion.

Our inquiry may begin with the question of the origin of religion. A certain ambiguity lurks in the word origin. Like the Aristotelian ἀρχή, it is susceptible of two meanings: it can signify the beginning or temporal starting-point of a series, and likewise the cause or ground of the series (αἷτιον). The origin of religion in the former sense would be a purely historical question. When and how in the history of the world did religion first appear? In the second case the inquiry turns on

the psychological causes which bring religion into being. The first problem in the nature of the case cannot be solved with the materials at our disposal ; the vast prehistoric period is veiled in darkness, and the conditions and character of the earliest human life can only be inferred more or less uncertainly. How or when religion first appeared in the world is, therefore, a hopeless inquiry. This much we may affirm, anything worthy to be called religion could not have emerged among mankind prior to the formation of some kind of social union, and without a certain development of language. The second problem offers a more fruitful field of inquiry. It signifies that we investigate the genetic - causal ground of religious development. The question may be put thus, What elements in the inner life of man, interacting with his outer environment, beget that attitude of mind which is termed religion ? The sources cannot be temporary or accidental. For amid ceaseless change in outward circumstances and social conditions religion abides as an element in culture. Like art and morals, it is a permanent expression of the human spirit. What, then, are its roots in man's inner nature ? We seek a psychological explanation, and the ontological ground of the phenomenon is not in question.

Before dealing with this matter, it might seem

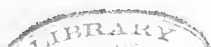


advisable to define religion. Such a definition, however, to have any value would require to be based on an adequate examination of the phenomena. And while I admit we need some principle of distinction between what is religious and what is not, I believe the importance of a verbal definition to be secondary. In point of fact I doubt whether, in a case where the phenomena are so wide in range and diverse in spiritual significance, any one formula will perfectly embrace all the facts.<sup>1</sup> Such a definition, for example, as is given by Menzies in his 'Handbook on the History of Religion,' "Religion is the worship of unseen powers from a sense of need," will work well enough; but it is not always equally applicable. Still, I do not see that we should gain anything by going over the historic types of religion to find, if possible, a common feature which will serve as a label. And there is a danger that if we proceed by eliminating the specific features of particular religions in order to come to some common quality which belongs equally to all, the result may be a superficial abstraction.<sup>2</sup>

We are more likely to grasp the essence of religion by showing the constant factors which generate it.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. i. p. 39 ff.

<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that Höfding has fallen into this error when he finds the essence of religion to be "faith in the persistence of value."



The significance of these factors changes with the different phases and stages of the religious consciousness, but they maintain an identity in their differences. Stated in their most general form these factors are the subject and object : and religion—from *religare*, to bind—denotes a bond between them. Both terms of the relation must, however, be qualified in a particular way ere we have that determinate modification of consciousness called piety, or religion. The object always comes before the mind as real, as possessing *power*, and so able to affect men for weal or woe. A powerless god is a contradiction ; and so the fetish which is judged to be impotent is discarded. Further, the subject must be determined in a special way by the object. The purely intellectual apprehension of the object may be the attitude of mind in science or philosophy, but it is not so in religion. Hence, to say that religion arises from the Infinite involved in consciousness is not enough. Though the fact be true, there would not be religion without further predisposing conditions in the subject. An epistemological analysis cannot do duty for the presentation of psychological motives. For religion a certain emotional tone is necessary—the feeling of awe and reverence. But religion as an affection of the subject is not merely an impression received from the object. The subject relates itself to the object,

and the pressure of its inwardly felt needs prompts it to do so. These needs the power or powers worshipped are believed to be able to satisfy. Hence the sense of trust and dependence which is involved in the religious consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the bond between worshipper and worshipped is a practical one: it appeals to the will, and is realised in the acts which constitute the cultus and represent religious conduct. For "religion means that action is bound, obliged, that there is no choice between opposites, but supreme decidedness for the right without option."<sup>2</sup>

The primacy of feeling in originating religion has often been noted. "Primus in orbe fecit deos timor." The frequently quoted saying of Statius, however, unduly limits the emotional motives. Not only fear but awe and wonder, gratitude and hope, assist at the birth of faith. Nevertheless we admit that fear, disappointment, anxiety, the feelings in short which are most closely connected with the limitations of the human lot, would be specially active in urging man to find a more assured existence, by establishing a bond of union with higher powers. Faith, even in its rudest form, implies a

<sup>1</sup> Even on purely psychological grounds M. Arnold's definition of religion as 'morality touched by emotion' is defective.

<sup>2</sup> Schelling, quoted by Wallace, 'Lectures on Natural Theology and Ethics,' p. 59.

certain discontent with what is : the sober present never fully corresponds to human desire and longing. Religion is the abiding witness to the truth that the human self can never find a full satisfaction through its environment.

But though great stress be laid on the urgency of feeling in developing the religious consciousness, feeling cannot stand alone as an explanation. For religion is also belief and demands a certain activity of mind. Feeling must be qualified by thought if it is to be significant : and the crudest religious relationship must have an element of universality in it. We cannot, as already remarked, conceive of a religion prior to the evolution of forms of speech ; and language which implies some sort of social union also implies some development of thought. The worshipper must have an idea of the powers or spirits which he worships, and this means at least a rudimentary capacity to generalise and hold before consciousness. H. Usener, in a suggestive investigation into the names of the gods, deals with the relation of language to primitive religion.<sup>1</sup> In his view the earliest objects of worship are gods of the moment (*Augenblicksgötter*), objects whom the desire and stress of the instant have made divine. By repetition a deity of this fugitive kind develops into a specific, or departmental god, and is desig-

<sup>1</sup> Die Götternamen.

nated adjectivally (the bright, the strong). Finally a god gets a name, becomes personal, and rises from the sensuous to the ideal sphere. Classes two and three in Usener's theory, correspond generally to the distinction between spiritism and polytheism. As to the first class, I doubt whether it can fairly be regarded as the primitive and original stage of the religious consciousness.<sup>1</sup> To invoke a thing as divine in the stress of the moment surely implies a consciousness of the divine which is wider than the particular experience. And a relation which is of the moment merely does not seem to be in the full sense religious. So far as Usener's *Augenblicksgötter* represent a real phase in the evolution of religion, they are best regarded as a degenerate outgrowth of his second class: we shall find that much the same relationship exists between fetishism and spiritism.

We conclude, then, that the psychological genesis of religion cannot be traced back to the emotional impulse of the moment. Feeling, we repeat, to be religious, involves some activity of thought; and religion presupposes that man has already put some sort of meaning into his experience of things. The crude meaning which he has read into the world about him serves as the basis on which he builds his religious faith. The early view of things which lies

<sup>1</sup> Usener cites as an illustration of an *Augenblicksgott*, Æschylus, 'Septem contra Thebas,' 529, 530.

behind religion is animism. In its origin animism is not a conscious theory, but man's instinctive projection of his own experience into the objects around him. The savage reads into the changing phenomena of nature the same life and power which he is conscious of within himself. Only thus are growth, movement, change in nature, intelligible to him. Winds and waters, clouds and stars, trees and plants were instinctively regarded as possessing a life like his own. Though we find it hard to realise, in the lower culture the idea of the inanimate and the unconscious does not exist; it only appears with the development of a greater capacity to abstract and generalise. Originating in an instinctive act of mind and not in deliberate reflexion, animism came to represent the way in which primitive man habitually thinks of the world around him. It is explanation in its primeval form. Animism is universal as a stage of culture; we see evidence of it among all races, from the Esquimaux and Finns in the north to the Australian aborigines in the south. By itself, however, it is not religion, as it is sometimes loosely termed. For in religion there must be a distinctive relation of the subject to an object, and this means an act of selection on the part of the subject. From the nature of the case worship must be directed to some things and not to everything, and what determines choice?

The answer clearly is that those objects which are believed to stand in close relation to individual desires and wants will be chosen. Primitive man acted on the rule *do ut des*, and the things he revered were always those he supposed could affect him for good or ill. It is the supervention of human need on the animistic view of the world which begets the religious bond: the determining factor is *within*, not *without*.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between animism and spiritism is not hard and fast. There is no historic evidence of a stage of culture where the first existed but not the second. The difference in name is justified if we regard spiritism as the result of a process which gave a higher form to the animistic consciousness. Worship, we saw, implied selection, and the attribution of a special power to the object selected. If a man reverences a tree or a stone it must be more than other trees and stones. It possesses power for good or ill, but why? The answer is that there is a spirit in it. This interpretation is psychologically intelligible, and is simply man's inreading into things of a development in his own experience. For the primitive mind the

<sup>1</sup> To say that religion is "the solution of the contradiction between outer determination and inner freedom" is no more than an abstract way of putting the psychological facts. In reality it does not describe these fully, and is of course no explanation of the ultimate meaning of religion.

distinction between fact and fancy, hallucination and real perception, the dream and the waking consciousness, does not exist. All experiences are alike objective. But the savage is confronted by the fact that his fleshly body has not really followed the course of his dreams. So a distinction develops between the body and the soul, the latter being conceived as a finer self, which usually dwells within the body though it is not confined to it, and sometimes wanders forth to strange adventures.<sup>1</sup> The dream is true, but it is a history of what happened to the soul in its absence from the body. The distinction which primitive man drew within his own experience he transferred to things about him. Hence arose the conception of spirits which reside in things but yet are not bound to them. The saying attributed to Thales, *πάντα πλήρη θεῶν*, is a reminiscence of the ubiquity of spirits in early culture. In springs and rivers, trees and groves, in fire and earth, they were found, all possible objects of reverence, if not all actually worshipped. All races have passed through this stage of belief, though they have differed in the degree of development they have given to it.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the remarks on the same point in the essay "On the Distinction between Inner and Outer Experience." The dream-soul or shadow-self plays a great part in the lower culture. For the Homeric view *vid.* Iliad, 23, 101-105. The Egyptian *Ka*, as is well known, was made the subject of elaborate doctrines.



Spiritism is closely interwoven with minor nature-worship, to use the phrase of Reville. Places frequented by spirits, the objects in which they dwelt, became sacred. Hence there were holy wells and groves, trees and mountains, for spirits haunted them who could help or hurt men. The selection of these sites was sometimes due to the need they supplied: the spring quenched man's thirst, the tree gave him fruit. At other times choice may have been due to some fortuitous circumstance which convinced the savage mind, not able to distinguish between conjunction and causality, that spirits were present there.<sup>1</sup> When once selected, sentiment gathered round a spot and tradition handed down its sanctity. The mystery of age by-and-by cast a spell on men's minds; and holy places have enjoyed a local reverence, and sometimes more than this, even when the faith which created them has lost its power to move mankind. The tree in the Arician grove, the oak of Dodona, the 'green tree' which overshadowed the Canaanitish altars, and the sacred wells of our own land, all tell the tale how the vestiges of an older cult may linger on and touch the imagination of an after-age. The careful inquirer who looks beneath the surface of a later culture will always find

<sup>1</sup> The application of the principle *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is the source of many of the vagaries of early belief.

traces of a minor nature-worship which once was flourishing.

The question suggests itself, What is the relation of the minor to the greater nature-worship? By the latter is meant the worship, for example, of heaven, sun and moon, dawn and thunder. Reville has suggested that the latter is an extension or outgrowth from the lesser nature-worship.<sup>1</sup> The hypothesis is tempting, especially to those who like to see orderly progress everywhere. For minor nature-worship is circumscribed in its appeal and conservative in its tendency. But the greater nature-worship cannot be locally restricted in this way: even the primitive barbarian would find it hard to claim for his tribe a monopoly of the sun or the heavens. Man in all his wanderings could not pass away from them, and so the worship of the larger phenomena of nature ultimately became, as we shall see, a means of transition from the tribal to a wider form of religious union. Nevertheless one cannot see why the one form of worship necessarily precedes the other; and the savage who is capable of reverencing an animal or a tree should also be able to worship the sun or moon. It would be hazardous to apply the maxim of Cicero in this case, "*Quod crebro videt non miratur*";

<sup>1</sup> *Religions des Peuples non Civilisés*, vol. ii. p. 225.

for the rolling thunder, the howling wind, the changing moon must have forced themselves on the notice and provoked the awe and wonder of the humblest barbarian. It seems safer to conclude that the greater nature-worship, if it did not develop so rapidly, in its beginnings may be as early as the minor nature-worship.<sup>1</sup> And both have their roots in animism.

But the individual who has reached a satisfactory conclusion about the facts we have been considering is perplexed by a fresh group of religious phenomena which, to appearance, seems rather remotely related to the other group. I refer to Ancestor-worship, the worship of the souls of the dead, and Totemism. Between the members of this second class a connexion may be shown, but the relation of the whole class to the first class is less clear. Is the one group earlier than the other, and, if so, which is the earlier? Are both independent growths, and, if not, is it possible to show how the one developed out of the other? Mr Herbert Spencer, it is well known, regards ancestor-worship as primitive and nature-worship as derivative—"an aberrant form of ghost-worship."<sup>2</sup> The theory has found few supporters,

<sup>1</sup> This seems to me one of the points where our defective knowledge of primitive psychical conditions makes it unsafe to dogmatise.

<sup>2</sup> *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, 687.

and in itself it is neither natural nor probable. Yet the cult of the Manes is undoubtedly very old, older among the Aryans, according to Fustel de Coulanges, than the cult of Indra or Zeus.<sup>1</sup> But though it existed prior to the evolution of the greater gods, we cannot say that it is the oldest form of spiritism. The spirits man found in nature were a reflex of the soul he had learned to recognise in himself; and it seems at least likely that the spirits in the world about him first provoked his worship, because they were more readily associated with his daily wants and fears. The psychological causes which specialised spiritism in the cult of souls are fairly clear. Early man, we saw, had no notion of the inanimate, and death appeared to him no more than a kind of sleep in which the soul was still active. The reappearance of the dead in dreams was a sure token that they still haunted the earth in ghost-like form. The soul was thought to linger near the body it once inhabited, and like other spirits these souls of the departed could powerfully affect the living for good or evil. Of the doctrine of ghost-souls Dr Tylor says, that "it extends through barbarian life almost without a break, and survives largely and deeply in the midst of civilisation." The student of Greek and Roman religion, for example, will find abundant evidence for it in the

<sup>1</sup> *La cité antique*, p. 19.

burial customs and other survivals in the historic period.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be inferred that the organised worship of the spirits of ancestors is later than the primitive cult of ghosts ; for it implies a growth in the consciousness of the value of family and social ties. The god who is an ancestor in claiming the worship of his descendants rests his appeal on the sense of a common bond and the duty of a common loyalty. The cult of ancestral souls depends on family and tribal solidarity. At this point emerges the link of connexion between ancestor-worship and totemism. In the lower stages of culture the tribal bond could only be conceived in an external and material way, as embodied in a thing. The totem is the reflex of the sense of unity in clan or tribe. It is true that totemism is not a purely religious phenomenon. It is connected with exogamy, and is associated with prohibitions which may not have had a religious significance at first. But undoubtedly the totem—the plant or animal which was the ancestor of the tribe and embodied its life—came to be an object of religious reverence. The

<sup>1</sup> Besides the work of F. de Coulanges, we may refer to E. Rohde's book, 'Psyche.' The reader will find there the evidence for a primitive cult of souls in Greece, drawn from burial customs recorded in Homer and elsewhere. On Greek and Roman tombs the inscriptions are found—*θεοῖς χθονίοις*, *Dis Manibus*. Cp. Eurip., *Alcestis*, 1003, 1004,—*νὺν δ' ἐστὶ μάκαρα δαίμων χαῖρ' ὦ πότνι*, *εὖ δὲ δοίης*.

selection of an ancestor from the animal or vegetable kingdom will cease to surprise us when we remember how vague is the conception of causality in the savage, and how constantly he reads his own consciousness into the things around him. The point of interest is that the thought of religion as represented in a physical bond—one of blood—was a germ which in a favourable soil might rise to a higher form and bring forth ethical fruit. Totemism flourished most luxuriantly among the Indians of North America, and we find it in Australia and among the Arabs and other Semites. That it was a widespread phenomenon is undeniable; that it was a phase through which *all* religions passed, like spiritism, is not proved, and can well be doubted. The reverence paid to animals, as in Egypt, may be due to a primitive animal-worship and not to totemism. And some religions, like the Greek and Roman, show no clear trace of it at all. Between the worship of the totem-ancestor and the worship of the soul of the human ancestor of the family or clan there is no clearly marked line of separation. But the latter object has a more ideal significance, and is better fitted to be a means to a higher development of the religious consciousness. The rude fear of the souls of the dead, out of which ancestor-worship issues, is gradually leavened by sentiments of loyalty and devotion. As the

sense of the worth of social union deepens, so is the religious relation elevated. In the Roman cult of the forefathers of the family who in spirit watched over its fortunes, representing to the later generations its best traditions and linking the present to the remoter past by the bond of filial piety and common interest, we realise the possibilities of growth in this form of worship.<sup>1</sup> In China, the land of ancestor-worship, piety takes as its main form fidelity to the tie which links the children to divine forefathers. As a general fact we note that at the stage of ancestor-worship man's social relations begin to play a part in colouring his religious conceptions. The tie of family and of tribe is traced back to the more enduring bond which links man to his gods.

At this point it will be convenient to discuss briefly the place of Fetishism and Magic in the development of religion. Both have sometimes been regarded as primitive, although the majority of writers incline to treat them as later products—fetishism especially being reckoned a degeneration from something higher. The only useful test we can apply to settle the question is that of psychological consistency. A fetish may be any kind of material object, a stone, shell, claw, or root. The

<sup>1</sup> For the higher side of Roman family piety, see Pater's chapter on "The Religion of Numa" in 'Marius the Epicurean.'

point is that it is conceived to be the abode of a spirit, and so is credited with superhuman powers. Belief in spirits, therefore, is a psychological condition presupposed by the selection of the fetish, and fetish-worship is thus a special application of spiritism. In harmony with this fetishism is rife where spiritism is rampant. To the mind of the West African negro the world teems with spirits, and West Africa is the land where fetishism abounds. Though fetishism is not primitive, it does not stand on the line of higher religious development. For it gives a form to the religious relationship which is crude and arbitrary to a degree, and it offers no possibilities of progress. Psychologically fetishism is explicable by the natural desire of man to establish a closer connexion with the spirits by physical means, in order to further his own ends. But its tendency is to set up a kind of control over, instead of dependence on, higher powers, which is not in harmony with the religious idea.<sup>1</sup>

A similar line of argument applies to magic. Like fetishism it has its root in spiritism, and it has flourished most where spiritism has prevailed greatly. We may illustrate this from the Finns and the early Sumerian inhabitants of Babylonia; and Roman and

<sup>1</sup> Fetishism, it should be noted, is closely associated with idolatry, but it exists in some of the lower races without it—*e.g.*, among the Bushmen, the Esquimaux, and the Andaman Islanders.



Chinese magic had their roots in the dominant animism which gave a character even to the later religious development of both peoples. The same psychological motives are at work as in fetishism. The magic word, rite, or formula can control the spirits, and the sorcerer is venerated for his knowledge and power. Hence it is hard to believe that Dr J. G. Frazer's view of magic, as set forth in the second edition of 'The Golden Bough,' is correct. He thinks that religion arose out of the failure of magic, and in despair of its efficacy.<sup>1</sup> Dr Frazer, I think, fails to recognise the universal character of the psychological motives which led to religion. There are plenty of examples to show that magic and religion can easily exist together among the same people. Nor is it likely that primitive peoples came naturally to despair of magic. Faith in its efficacy has often survived the strongest reasons for disbelief. And even granted the existence of such a despair, one does not see why the reaction against magic should constantly issue in religion as a kind of *dernier ressort*. Moreover, there is no evidence that there are or have been low tribes who practised magic but had not a religion; and even were it so, it might be argued that it was religion which had died out while magic survived.<sup>2</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 62 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Vid.* A. Lang, *Magic and Religion*, p. 47.

altogether much more intelligible to regard magic as a lower outgrowth of the religious consciousness.

The forms of religion we have been considering are all found at the tribal stage of culture. Do these forms represent the full development of tribal religion? There is a certain amount of evidence that even on this low level of culture advances have been made towards the conception of a Supreme Being. As illustrating this we may point to Torngarsuk, or Great Spirit, of the Greenlanders, Atahocan, or Creator, of the Algonquin Indians, Unkulunkulu, the Old Old One, of the Zulus. Manitu, the Great Spirit of the North American Indians generally, and Baiame, the Creator, of the native Australian tribes, may also be noted. In some cases we can see that ancestor-worship led to the idea of a Great or First Ancestor, as among the Zulus. In others the supremacy of the greater and stronger over the smaller and weaker perhaps suggested a highest god. This may have been so where ancestors were not worshipped. And sometimes the great god of low tribes is plausibly explained by contact, direct or indirect, with Christian ideas; but it is not always so. The existence of great gods amongst savage races has, curiously enough, prompted Mr A. Lang to rehabilitate the old hypothesis of a primitive theism. "Our conception of God descends not from ghosts but from

the Supreme Being of non-ancestor-worshipping peoples.”<sup>1</sup> Animism Mr Lang finds to be “full of the seeds of degeneration”; and it appears to have ousted a purer religion by the attractions it possessed for the natural man.<sup>2</sup> So in Guiana, we are told, the ghost-cult has reduced the primitive Father of all to a *nominis umbra*; among the Bantu tribes devotion to fetishes and ghosts has brought the Supreme Being into neglect; while among the Zulus Unkulunkulu is a vanishing greatness. Mr Lang’s contributions to our knowledge of early culture and mythology have secured a hearing for this venturesome hypothesis. But if he is right the current notions of religious development must be entirely revised; animism and spiritism cease to be primitive, and must be regarded as lapses from a higher and an earlier religious level. On this theory it may be sufficient to remark—(1) The evidence that some low tribes have risen to the idea of a Supreme Being, where it is satisfactory, still only refers to a stage of development which is comparatively recent, and cannot be taken as a proof of what is primitive. Though some modern savages have formed for themselves an idea of a Supreme Being, this is no proof that prehistoric man could have done so. (2) Such great gods, where genuine native growths, are

<sup>1</sup> Making of Religion, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 264, 257.

explicable as later products of the savage mind. They were superadded to the spirits, but were never so firmly fixed in the traditions and sentiments of the people. (3) While the vestiges of a primitive animism are to be found everywhere behind the later stages of religious development, the same is by no means true of a primitive theism. (4) The theory attributes too great psychical capacity to primitive races, and ignores the force and intelligibility of the psychological reasons which produced animism.

We may now attempt to state briefly the general features of religion at the tribal stage of its history. Here, as elsewhere, the character of religion reflects the inner consciousness of man, which again is conditioned by his social relations. At this period self-consciousness is relatively undeveloped, and the spiritual life does not definitely contrast itself with or oppose itself to the natural world. Imagination is fettered to the domain of sense, and cannot rise to the thought of an ideal bond or a supersensuous world. The gods belong to the realm of nature : if not absolutely identified with material objects, they are more or less closely bound up with them. Personality is dormant, the individual is merged in the tribe, and religious growth is unconscious. The day of the prophet, reformer, and spiritual teacher has not dawned. The rude pre-

cursor of these is the sorcerer and the medicine-man. As yet religious change is gradual and comes without observation. In harmony with this, the private belief of the individual, if he has any, is unimportant: each member of the tribe shares its religion by taking part in the cult. His religion is determined for him by his membership of the family or clan, and is part of his birth inheritance. A man can only change his religion by breaking his social bonds and undergoing initiation into an alien tribe which "serves other gods." The spiritual not being properly differentiated at this stage from the natural, human needs are restricted to the material, and desires do not rise above the sensuous. The stress of life is embodied in the constant endeavour to supply the wants of the body and to gain protection or deliverance from danger. For man has not yet gained that material basis of existence which, in giving him fuller security, also gives him leisure to reflect: and as the circle of his needs is limited, so is the scope of his religious interest. The colourless uniformity which is manifest in tribal religions is a consequence of the poverty of social life, which cannot nourish a complex and developed personality.

At first we are astonished at the recurrence of the same beliefs and rites among the most distant tribes. But we wonder less when we remember that men

everywhere have the same limited group of material wants, and bring the same mental constitution to bear on these wants. Monotony—the lack of distinctive character—is a note of tribal religions. Primitive religion certainly made for loyalty to the tribal bond, yet in casting the shadow of a religious sanction over tribal divisions, it hindered rather than helped the advent of wider forms of social union. The merging of tribes in the nation was not due to the pressure of religious motives.

In correspondence with man's slender inner development the gods of tribal religion are lacking in content. The worshipper's poverty of character is mirrored in the objects which he worships. The host of spirits which encircled the savage were differentiated one from another only in an external way—*i.e.*, by local habitation and office. One dwells in a tree and another in a spring, one is invoked that he may do good, another is propitiated lest he work harm : but otherwise their nature remains vague and undefined. The god is not personified ; he does not combine and body forth a group of determinate qualities. In other words, the gods of tribal religion do not rise to the level of personal character.<sup>1</sup> Hence their relations to the worshipper

<sup>1</sup> Usener thinks that up to the time of the division of the Indo-Germanic peoples the Aryans did not have concrete personal gods. —'Götternamen,' p. 279.

are material and external. To this the religious rites bear witness. Sacrifice, for example, goes far back in the history of the race. Yet in primitive sacrifice the ethical element is quite undeveloped. As is now generally agreed, sacrifice was originally a common meal which the god shared with his worshippers, and was a means of strengthening the bond of union between them.<sup>1</sup> That bond was one of life or blood. So with prayer; it was only the expression of personal desire for some tangible good. A higher stage of religion could only come with the development of a deeper personal consciousness in man. For with the deepening of the inner life there goes perforce a demand for more elevated ideas of the gods and a recasting of the religious relationship. The new wine must have new bottles. We shall now try to indicate shortly the significance of the transition from tribal to national religion.

The process by which various clans and tribes are fused into a nation is not one which we can actually observe. In some cases, however, analysis of the composite product enables us to form a fairly clear idea of the different elements, and of the way in which they were gradually combined in the national whole. It may be confidently asserted

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* W. R. Smith's *Religion of the Semites*, p. 439. Cp. *Iliad*, i. 451.

that no nation was ever formed by simple and continuous expansion of a single stock or clan. Tribal history is full of warfare and conquest. The victory of the stronger tribe, the subjugation and final incorporation of the weaker, have been the means by which the formation of larger social organisations has been promoted. The building up of the Roman people from a nucleus of Italic clans is a case in point. As a nation develops, the elements which have entered into it consolidate; men enjoy a larger security and have less anxiety about the satisfaction of bodily wants. Hence the way is opened out for the growth of reflective consciousness, and to the outward expansion of the social system there corresponds an inward deepening of the personal life. A new and higher range of desires emerges; and along with this goes the demand for a definite advance in the form of religion. The local aspects of the older faiths are felt to be out of harmony with a wider outlook and higher needs. The sacred spring and tree and the spirit-haunted holy place do not lend themselves to the reverence of a whole nation. Nor can family ancestors, or the totem of the clan, both resting on ties of blood, become truly national gods without losing their significance. In Rome, for instance, although Vesta, the deity of the domestic hearth, became a state-goddess, the cult of the



forefathers of the family was shared only by the family.<sup>1</sup>

The birth of a nation brings with it a new sense of the value of order and uniformity which, in the religious sphere, makes for a new organisation of beliefs. Moreover, the interaction of the diverse religious ideas which tribes bring with them into the nation is favourable to religious development. The need of harmonising discordant elements and establishing some form of unity is a stimulus to religious reflexion.<sup>2</sup> It might be thought that a ruling race whose influence was dominant would simply impose its religion on the lower peoples under its sway. But only to a limited extent is this possible. The conservative force of sentiment and tradition always prevents one religion from completely usurping the place of another. The dominant and official cult never wholly ousts the weaker one from its local strongholds, and in its own development is modified by it. Behind Babylonian polytheism lurk the magic and the spirits of the old Sumerian inhabitants. The primitive

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in the general idea of kinship between men and gods we may trace the survival, at a higher level of development, of tribal notions of blood-relationship. But the important thing is that tribal religion, in any of its forms, is not adequate to the national consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> It is worthy of note that races which have suffered from isolation—*e.g.*, Finns and Lithuanians—have remained long on the lower levels of religious belief.

animal worship of the different nomes shows itself beside the greater gods of the Egyptian Empire. Hindu idolatry suggests how the religion of the Aryan conquerors of India has been influenced by the fetishism of the aborigines. Religions die hard. Indeed the tenacious life which preserves a lower form of faith beside a higher is a widespread phenomenon, well known to all students of human culture. It can be illustrated from Christian as well as from pagan lands.

Minor nature-worship, as we have seen, is local and tribal in its character and tendency, while the worship of the greater powers of nature lends itself to the outlook of a larger religious faith. The heavens and the sun, the thunder and the storm, have a world-wide range and sphere of operation. They were therefore fitted to be the objects of a worship that transcended the local cults of clan and tribe. We can understand, then, how the national consciousness, reacting against the narrow form of tribal religion, and stirred to advance by the opposition of beliefs, intuitively laid hold on the greater nature-worship, as that side of older faith which could be expanded to meet its larger wants. A personification of the greater powers of nature lies behind the organised

polytheism of the national religions.<sup>1</sup> The traces of the nature-origin of many of the greater gods have almost vanished, but sometimes we can detect enough to suggest to us what the basis of the later development has been. A few illustrations will make this more plain. That the chief gods of the Veda are personifications of natural powers appears fairly certain. The drama of the storm lies at the root of Indra, and Agni is primarily fire. Varuna is possibly the all-seeing heaven. In China, Tian is the personification of the celestial firmament. The Baalim, or Lords, of the Semites, Merodach, god of Babylon, and the Egyptian Ra are sun-gods. The Hellenic Zeus shows vestiges of his connexion with the phenomena of the sky, with rain, wind, and thunder—*ἕσπον, ὃ φίλε Ζεῦ, κατὰ τῆς ἀρούρας τῶν Αθηναίων*.

The Roman Jupiter has likewise a primitive connexion with the heaven—"Sub frigido Jove"—and a philological kinship with his Hellenic counterpart.

These examples might be added to. But enough has been said to justify the view we have taken of the way in which the national consciousness raised

<sup>1</sup> It is not, of course, meant that all the greater gods were originally nature-powers. Brahma is an instance of a god originating in the cult. The Roman religion furnishes examples of the apotheosis of purely social functions.

tribal religion to a form adequate to its needs. It did so by developing the greater nature-worship into a polytheistic system. And in the process the material basis of the gods was gradually outgrown. The physical root of a deity is overlaid with higher attributes, and resembles the rudimentary organs of some animal type by which the biologist is able to spell out its remoter lineage. This development consists in giving content and personal definiteness to the idea of a god ; and it is made possible by the growth of higher social and ethical qualities within the nation. The evolution of personal character on earth gives a higher conception of the things in heaven.

“ Und wir verehren  
Die Unsterblichen  
Als wären sie Menschen,  
Thäten im Grossen  
Was der Beste im Kleinen  
Thut oder möchte.”

The movement of the mind by which the gods are clothed with all human virtues likewise invests them with higher social meaning. They become the ideal representatives and protectors of special departments of the national life. The earthly state has a counterpart in the commonwealth above. So the interests, aspirations, and activities of a race, as well as the different aspects of its social life, are

represented in the gods of the State, and as the moral consciousness grows they receive a correspondingly higher moral character. To illustrate this. In China, Tian, or Heaven, was identified with the principle of order, and measure, and just custom, and became the pattern of right for those upon the earth. The Vedic Varuna was exalted to the place of a highest ruler who saw all things, who required piety in his worshippers, and to whom confession of sins was made. The Greek Apollo may have been originally a light-god, but he afterwards became the deity who presided over the art of healing, and wielded the gift of prophecy. Athene, who was perhaps at first the lightning-flash, became the goddess who was the pattern of civic valour and good counsel, and whose interests were bound up with the city which was called by her name. Mars, an ancient Italian deity of spring and fertility, cast his preserving care over agriculture, and became the god of war as well. The Teutonic Odin, besides war, took understanding and culture under his protection. The Egyptian Osiris, who appears to have been originally the Sun after his setting, was raised to be ruler of the realm of departed spirits, the moral judge who weighs in a balance the good and evil done in the flesh. The ascription of diverse functions to the one god was a consequence of the multiplication of human

interests and activities. Yet this was not the sole reason. Sometimes the process was due to the desire to introduce unity and coherence into the local cults. In Egypt the sun-god Ra absorbed the various local sun-gods, who became aspects of Ra. In Greece we find a like movement working upon more diverse materials. The Zeus ἐνδένδριος of Dodona was no doubt a primeval tree-spirit. The Zeus ἄλιος was a god of the sea. The Zeus χθόνιος worshipped at Mount Ida and Crete—at both of which the grave of Zeus was shown—was probably an earth-spirit. These gods, really of diverse origin, were harmonised by being designated as aspects of Zeus. But this tendency to unify is not strictly universal, and a society as it grows more complex sometimes goes on adding to its deities. This was markedly the case among the Romans, whose crowd of ‘little gods,’ thinly veiled abstractions as they were, was constantly being augmented.<sup>1</sup> But the influences which make for unification commonly predominate at this stage. Political and social reasons make it desirable that the citizens of a state should not be divided in their religion.

The organisation of society suggests a supremacy and headship among the gods. The reflective consciousness seeks unity behind multiplicity, and looks for a greater god on whom the lesser gods depend.

<sup>1</sup>  *Vid. Aust, Die Religion der Römer, 19, 20.*

Moreover, this tendency of thought is supported by the instinct which is in the worshipper to adore a particular god as supreme in the act of reverence. The suppliant craving the help of a god thinks of that god for the time being as greatest and strongest. The existence of the other gods is of course in no sense denied. This attitude of the religious mind has been termed *Kathenotheism*, and Vedic worship is usually cited as an illustration of it. Sayce finds the same movement of mind in the religion of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

A further advance towards unity is revealed in *Henotheism*, which means that while many gods are admitted to exist, worship is reserved for one only. The dividing line between these two phases of belief is shadowy. In the latter case, however, faith in the supremacy and uniqueness of the god worshipped has become a permanent, not a passing, attitude of mind.

The Hebrew Psalmist has been quoted as speaking the language of *Henotheism*. "Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: Thou art exalted above all gods" (Ps. xcvi. 9). And the well-known lines of Xenophanes are *henotheistic* in spirit:—

Εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος  
Οὔτε δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὔτε νόημα.

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<sup>1</sup> Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia, p. 93.

But there is another and a more developed aspect of the tendency to unify. The reflective consciousness discerns a divine element in all the gods, or recognises some higher law immanent in the world of gods. Such are the Greek *Tò θεῖον* and *Μοῖρα*, and the Hindu *Rita*. The further progress of this movement leads to pantheism with its reduction of the manifold world of divine forms to appearances of the One. Whether this path is followed to its logical conclusion or not depends on several conditions. Capacity for speculative thought in a people counts for something. Still more important is the degree in which personality has been developed in the social system. Where a high sense of personality has been linked with imaginative power the forms of divine beings are clearly defined, and their character is concrete. In which case the gods resist the process of fusion into a pantheistic whole. It is also true that where the developed consciousness of personality is accompanied by a keen perception of moral values, pantheism does not find a favourable soil in which to grow. In India the Aryan conquerors seem early to have lost the vigour and self-assertion of their race. The Hindu was oppressed by the burden of life in a tropical land rather than quickened by its interests: personality was slenderly developed, and the forms of the gods remained vague and shadowy. Already in the



Veda the process of blending has begun. "They have styled him Indra, Mithra, Varuna, Agni, for the poets have many names for the One." The issue of this movement of thought is contained in the words of the Vedanta, "He who knows the highest Brahma becomes Brahma." Nay, such knowledge is only the intuition of what always has been, the Eternal One! All else is illusion. In ancient Egypt the official religion was construed by the priesthood into a subtle pantheism, which, however, was more an esoteric product than was the case in India. On the other hand, the Greek genius had given such definite and artistic form to the gods that the process of fusion could not be carried out. Greek pantheism is a late philosophical product which did not concern itself with the traditional religion.

In contrast to this line of development which ends in the *impasse* of pantheism, another line leads on to monotheism. The former movement is mainly intellectual, in the latter moral forces play a part. And if it be granted that piety and reverence are rooted in the nature of man, then beyond question monotheism is the higher and truer development: it gives the more complete expression to the religious principle. Historically the advance from polytheism to monotheism has been by way of monarchism. The term signifies that one out of a circle of gods is

represented as supreme and having sway over the rest : the favoured god may have been the deity of a conquering race, or of a city which has established a rule over other cities. Such were Amon-Ra of Thebes, and Merodach of Babylon. Among the Greeks Zeus was raised to a kind of sovereignty over the other gods, and so Homer depicts him.<sup>1</sup> He has a shadowy counterpart in the Jupiter Optimus Maximus of the Roman Capitol.

Monotheism is distinguished from monarchism by its refusal to admit the existence of many gods, and its affirmation that there is but one God. The Psalmist speaks the language of monotheism when he declares, "All the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. xcvi. 5). On a superficial view it might seem that the transition from monarchism to monotheism was simple and easy. But it is not so : the definite rejection of the claim to existence of all gods save the One is a step as difficult as it is important. Sentiment and tradition as well as local associations do battle for polytheism, and the conservative instincts, which are so powerful in religion, protest against the thought that the objects of a long-lived faith are unreal. Even though discredited in the eyes of those who know, the old gods find a refuge in quiet places among the simple and unlearned. The

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Iliad, viii. 1-35.

strenuous warfare the Hebrew prophets had to wage against the local Baalim is an illustration of the tenacious life of polytheism. Indeed the establishment of a pure monotheism means a self-conscious reaction against the religion of the past which is more the outcome of moral and spiritual than of intellectual forces. It argues a higher spiritual development in individuals, in virtue of which they realise keenly that their worship cannot be divided among several but must be reserved for the one object. When men are fully persuaded that there is but the one God who is worthy of their reverence and service, the figures of other deities perforce grow shadowy and unreal; and the process ends in the explicit denial of their existence. Monotheism, as distinguished from pantheism and polytheism, rests on a developed sense of spiritual personality. In harmony with this God is conceived as a Being who transcends the world and His worshippers, but enters into personal relations with men.

On the higher levels of ethical religion the influence of individuals on the course of religious development becomes very important. Even at the stage of the nature-religions it must have been true that the influence of some individuals on religious development was greater than that of others. Yet growth was, on the whole, uncon-

scious ; for the individual had not come to the consciousness of an inner life of his own, in virtue of which he could set his own experience in contrast with that of his tribe, and initiate changes on his own responsibility. Tribal society does not give scope for personal centres of light and leading. The development of self-consciousness through a higher social organisation makes it possible for the individual to become a determining factor in the advance of religion. He recognises that what he feels and thinks has a value. In virtue of their inner experience the prophet and the religious teacher purify religious ideas and hand them on in a higher form. Seeing further than other men, they give articulate voice to what the popular mind is only dimly groping after. They become themselves personal influences, the sources of far-reaching movements, the centres round which thought and sentiment gather and from which they continue to be inspired. And when the historic form has grown faint, seen through a space of intervening years, pious imagination adorns it with myth and legend.

In a sense, humanity is right in magnifying the great spiritual personalities of the past. For these men are only explicable up to a point through their environment. We can, for instance, always find links which connect them and their message

with what has gone before: so it cannot be said that the principle of continuity between the past and present is wholly set aside. On the other hand, the attempt to show that they are simply the products of their age and surroundings is never perfectly convincing.<sup>1</sup> The spiritual genius is usually in advance of his time, and sometimes in sharp opposition to its main tendency; and he gives a specific direction to religious progress which is not explained by a general reference to the "spirit of the age." The depth of individual character and the uniqueness of personal experience contribute a distinctive element to the riper stages of religious development,—an element which we cannot bring entirely within the scope of racial tendencies and social forces. The prophet of one age would have been different in another, but this does not prove that the age is the exhaustive explanation of the man. Does Judaism, for example, at the beginning of our era render perfectly intelligible the life and teaching of Christ? One cannot resist the conviction that explanations of this kind are made to appear sufficient by unwarrantably reading into the past what is necessary for the purpose in hand. The adequate discussion of the question would lead us, however, beyond the domain of psychology. So

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Tiele, *Science of Religion*, vol. i. p. 244 ff.

we simply note the fact that the deepening of the religious self-consciousness and the advent of great religious personalities render the development of religion more complex, and so more difficult to interpret as the outcome of general conditions. We find an analogy to the spiritual genius rather in the poet or creative artist than in the speculative thinker. And it is easier to detect rational continuity in the evolution of philosophy than of religion.

The stress which is laid on the inward and spiritual side of religion is fruitful in consequences. Worship of itself tends to stiffen into a mechanical and external cult, where the *opus operatum* counts for much and faith for very little. The dominance of the ritual element makes religion one-sided and provokes reaction. So on the upper levels of Ethical Religion, with the deepening of the subjective consciousness there is a recoil from the tyranny of outward form; and the result is to bring into relief the religious value of inner experience, and to emphasise the need of faith. The new prominence of the subjective factor helps to liberate religion from the local and racial limitations which have hitherto clung to it. For these appear alien and burdensome as men come to recognise the value of piety in the heart. The Hebrew prophets who found

the law of God within, and preached the cleansing of the heart and not of the garments, were the pioneers of an ampler creed. Already the weight of national exclusiveness was falling from them, and with the images at their disposal they prophesied the day of universal religion,—the day when all nations should come to Zion. The message of Buddha is strangely unlike that of the prophets of Israel. But he resembled them in this, that, as against the claims of a legal ritual and a material sacrifice, he declared the way of salvation to be within. And the inner sanctuary is a refuge for every man. “My redemption,” he said, “is a redemption for all.” The inner life receives a more positive value and a richer content in the teaching of Christ. The worth of a soul, he tells us, is greater than the world, and “the pure in heart see God.” And just because faith is an inward possession, and the only worship which avails is worship in “spirit and in truth,” the Christian religion rises in principle above all local and national limitations and becomes universal. That which is deepest in religion is likewise that which is free to every man—spiritual life. “One is your Father,” said Christ to men, “and all ye are brethren,”—brethren after the spirit though not after the flesh. As an ethical and spiritual religion Christi-

anity is the ripest fruit of religious development and the outcome of the fulness of the time. And it is of necessity that the religion which lays the deepest stress on individual faith and personal character should at the same time be the most universal. For faith is possible to all, and man is "saved" by faith, not by the "works of the law." In its historical evolution Christianity has doubtless not always been true to its principles. Alien ideas have affected its creed, and the religions which it superseded have reacted upon it. Hence the working out of its spiritual ideal has been hampered by lower elements. But the fact remains that Christianity has best enabled us to realise the thought of religion as a universal aspect of life and the deepest possession of the soul. Beyond doubt it is the maturest product of the historic development of the religious consciousness.

We must now try to gather together and to state more directly the conclusions which our historic discussion suggests. At the outset some general propositions will probably be agreed on. It will be granted that there is a progress in human culture, and religion as an element in culture shares in that progress. It is for instance clear that, as social life expands and grows more highly organised, it is accompanied by a refinement and elevation of religious conceptions. We



cannot go so far as to say that the progress of the one measures that of the other. But it is at least true that religion cannot remain apart from and unaffected by the development of the social whole in which it exists. In the second place, it is evident that the general trend of the religious advance is from the material to the spiritual. This upward movement is not so rapid in one religion as in another, nor is it uniform through different stages of the same religion: in some cases it may not exist at all. But that there is, on the whole, a progress of the kind mentioned will not be denied. The religious bond, for example, in early races one of blood, is gradually converted into one of inner character. And, in the third place, the direction which religious progress takes is towards universality. The history of religion discloses a movement from tribal through national to universal religion. The subjective factor in the religious consciousness, unimportant to begin with, becomes more and more important. Universal religion demands faith, which means an act of personal freedom, and it calls for piety, which is the expression of inward character. And there are no barriers to 'salvation' but those which a man raises within himself.

It being granted that there is a development of religion such as we have indicated, we must

now deal more directly with its interpretation. In what sense can we regard the higher and more complete form of religion as growing out of the ruder and earlier? That the later stage of a religion is related to the earlier, and cannot be understood apart from it, is of course clear. But can we speak of the religious idea as a germ which develops by an immanent law the blossom and fruit which were somehow in it from the beginning? The analogy of an organism is a tempting if not always a safe one, and it has been much used as a key to intellectual and spiritual progress. In the case of organic growth we may try to explain the process to ourselves by supposing that the typical line which that growth follows is due to the fact that the fully developed whole is somehow *implicitly* present in the beginning. How we are to think of this presence is not at all clear, and the explanation does not amount to much.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, I do not see that we can deny that organic growth is a movement to an end; which end, or developed result, appears to determine the successive phases of growth, so that the development follows a characteristic order. Interaction of organism with environment is, of

<sup>1</sup> A thoughtful criticism of the idea of development will be found in the lectures on 'The Development of Modern Philosophy' by the late Prof. Adamson. *Vid.* vol. ii. p. 185 ff.

course, necessary as a means, but the typical form is not created by the environment. The living germ means a determinate development and nothing else. Now I doubt if we can speak of the evolution of religion as a development in the foregoing sense. In organic growth the earlier stages are transmuted and taken up into the later. They cease to exist for themselves, and are only represented in the higher product. But in the history of religion we find that a lower stage survives alongside and refuses to be merged in the higher. This phenomenon of survival is too frequent to be treated as sporadic. And so we have religions in which the growth of higher beliefs has been hampered, and it may be arrested, by the pressure of older beliefs and practices.<sup>1</sup>

The analogy is defective at another point. I do not think we can assign a distinct germinal basis to religion such as the analogy of an organism requires. Religion is not a fact by itself: it is a psychological state, and it only exists as an aspect of the greater whole of self-conscious life. Hence, as its vitality and significance depend on the larger content of which it is an element, we cannot regard it as possessing a principle of growth in abstraction

<sup>1</sup> An example of this is the Roman religion, which never fairly succeeded in transmuting its primitive basis in animism into a higher system of belief.

from the unity to which it belongs. Religion grows with the growth of the mind. The other aspects of consciousness are *essentially* involved in the growth of the religious consciousness. We cannot correctly speak of the religious consciousness of itself unfolding by an immanent law the wealth implicit in it from the beginning. To put the same truth from another point of view, the social, scientific, and ethical culture of a race all help to determine the character of its religion.

It will perhaps be said that the other aspects of consciousness play the part of a spiritual environment to the religious idea, and are only necessary as a means to its unfolding. We cannot, however, make a valid distinction of active and passive in consciousness like this. And the facts of religious evolution do not bear out the view that these elements, which are described as a means, have no share in determining the characteristic form which religion takes at a given stage.

If we say, then, that there is a continuity in religious development, and different religions have a common character, in what sense do we understand the statement? Religions have a common character inasmuch as they are the expressions of the one human mind seeking satisfaction for needs which, broadly speaking, are the same. In our analysis of the religious consciousness we saw that it had a sub-

jective and an objective aspect,—on the one side the sense of need, incompleteness, and dependence, and on the other the conception of an object which can satisfy the subject. This is the generic form of the religious idea and the bond of unity between the different types of religion. These types are diverse, but they cannot fall outside the general notion and yet remain religions. The continuity of religious development has, as its primary condition, therefore, the unity of principle which is realised in all the phases of that development. The higher religions embody the idea in a larger and worthier form than the lower: they are the same spiritual consciousness on a further stage of its upward journey. Between the new and the older phase of religious development there is no absolute break, just as there is none in the individual between the religion of childhood, youth, and manhood. As the content of the religious consciousness deepens, it reacts on the form and strives to bring it into harmony with itself. But the new is ever reached by modification of the old, and it is not to be understood apart from it. Even where the principle of continuity is most threatened—viz., in the case of those religions which trace their distinctive character to the spiritual genius of great teachers—seeds of the new faith will be found in the past. And the greatest of religious teachers is under the necessity of appealing to men

through the ideas and forms to which they are accustomed. He can never inaugurate a new faith which is devoid of relation to the old, although at the same time we contend that personal initiative, resting on freedom, contributes an element to development which is more than the past can explain.<sup>1</sup>

Another question suggests itself. Have all specific religions played a part in the general development of religion? Many of these withered and died. Others, after a period of development appeared to lose vitality, and hardened down into a form which resisted further progress. Some vanished away when the culture out of which they arose broke up, and no one could say in what definite respect they have influenced the religion of posterity. As we look back on the extinct types of faith they seem futile creations of the human spirit, passing products of a passing age, their meaning and value perishing with them.

Yet it is possible to press the point of view too far. It would be absurd, for example, to assume that the various religions are isolated growths which run their course in mutual independence. Direct interaction can often be proved, and must have existed in many cases where clear evidence has not been discovered. The accumulation of fresh historic

<sup>1</sup> This takes us back to the old problem of the reality of freedom, a matter which has been referred to in the previous essay.

materials has already established points of contact not suspected before. We shall more readily admit the possibility of one religion influencing another when we keep in mind that religion is intimately related to the culture of a people, and is, perhaps, its most characteristic expression. An older civilisation breaks up and is followed by a younger, and a weaker is dominated by a stronger. Yet the earlier never vanishes utterly: surrounding civilisations retain traces of its influence, and in more ways than can be defined and measured it affects and modifies the civilisations which succeed it. Now it cannot be supposed that religion is excluded from this general influence, for it is a characteristic expression of the culture to which it belongs. Nevertheless, it must often be impossible to weigh and appreciate the effect of an element which is so interwoven with the whole.

The general conclusion that, in so far as there is a continuity in culture, there must also be a continuity in the various historic manifestations of religion, may seem meagre and indefinite. The speculative thinker will try, perhaps, to find some indwelling principle in religion, which realises itself in the historic religions and determines their place and sequence. But there are great obstacles to the working out of this conception. The solidarity of humanity is still imperfect, and it was far more

imperfect in primitive times. Consequently, though certain sections of the race have developed, others have been nearly stationary. The latter is especially true of tribes which have suffered from isolation and hard external conditions. Religious development has been conspicuous at favoured points rather than over the whole area of the race. Then while there is a connexion between certain centres of development, between the more distant points it becomes exceedingly vague. Thus we can show no valid reason for asserting that the development of religion, say in China, had a relation to and significance for the development of religion in Egypt. Humanity is not an organic whole, so that each religion must have a determinate place and value in the whole. Hence I think we must abandon the attempt to interpret the different religions by assigning them a place in a general scheme of development.

We shall be confirmed in this view by the examination of a very able and ingenious effort in this direction. I refer to the conception set forth by Dr Caird in his lectures on 'The Evolution of Religion.' He finds the key to the problem in a general analysis of consciousness. This yields an objective and a subjective factor, while the Absolute unites and harmonises them. Logically the Absolute is presupposed in the simplest act of knowledge, but as a temporal process mind advances by a movement



from objective to subjective consciousness, and finds its goal in the Absolute consciousness. Here we have the general form of religious development. We need not pause to urge the objection that the specific nature of religion is assumed, not explained, by an epistemological analysis of this kind. Dr Caird then goes on to show that in the earliest phase of religion God is represented under the form of an object among other objects. Against this defective form the mind ultimately reacts and passes over into the second stage, that of subjective religion, where God takes the higher form of the subject, and is conceived as mainly dwelling in and speaking to the soul of the individual. The final stage of the movement attains to adequacy of form in the idea of God as Universal Spirit, immanent in all objects and persons. The proper development of the final stage will, we are told, be the work of the future.

That primitive religion is objective in the sense indicated will be admitted. If the writer meant no more by the second stage than ethical religion, as Tiele suggests,<sup>1</sup> we should agree that the trend of development is in this direction. It seems clear, however, the meaning is that there is a dialectic movement which by way of reaction posits God, not in the world of objects, but dwelling in and

<sup>1</sup> *Elements of the Science of Religion*, vol. i. p. 61.

speaking through the inner life of the subject. But it is conceded that only nations which have attained a certain stage of civilisation display this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> We would like to know more precisely what the stage is, and whether the only test of its being reached is the manifestation of the movement in question. Civilisations have lasted long and still have not entered on the phase of subjective religion. And religions which, in their later stage at all events, contain ethical elements, such as the Roman, Egyptian, and Chinese, do not reveal this kind of movement. The illustrations which Dr Caird gives of his principle are not quite convincing. Buddhism may be called a subjective religion, but it is so because it sacrifices the idea of God altogether and substitutes for it an inner principle of redemption. The Israelitish prophets did lay stress on the divine law written on the heart and the divine voice speaking to the soul. But it is an exaggeration to call their religion subjective: they always believed in God as an objective and righteous Power. The prophets simply purified and gave new ethical content to the national religion.<sup>2</sup> Dr Caird's formula is a

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Another of Dr Caird's examples is Stoicism. But Stoic subjectivity represents a philosophical and political movement. We do not construe it as a reaction against the defective form of earlier Greek religion.

broad and flexible one, but for all that it does not find a simple and natural verification in the history of religion. Whether the Absolute Religion, as he conceives it, will complete the process and satisfy the modern consciousness is far from clear. If the practical religion of mankind depended on metaphysics, and certain metaphysical principles were generally accepted, it might be so. But these are not conditions likely to be fulfilled. Dr Caird on the whole fails to convince us that he has formulated the immanent law of religious development. There seems to be no inherent necessity that, when religious evolution takes place, it should proceed exactly in this way. There is not a general stage of subjective religion which corresponds to the nature-religions. Nor is there warrant for the view that any particular religion can reach a higher development only by passing through the subjective stage.

The effort then to interpret the evolution of religions through universal categories like subject and object is not, I think, helpful. But though we reject this method as inadequate there is another way open to us. We can at least try to set forth clearly the psychological principles involved. Indeed this seems to be a necessary preparation for any valid conclusions on the subject. The study of religion has suffered much

from the neglect of psychology, and the defect is only beginning to be remedied.

As we have remarked more than once, the mind or spirit as a whole is active in deepening the content of the religious consciousness, which in turn strives to give a more adequate form to the religious principle. And the law which seems to govern the spirit's operation is the necessity under which it lies of being in unity or harmony with itself. This has been enunciated by Tiele as the law of the unity of the mind.<sup>1</sup> So stated it is a general, not a specifically religious, principle. Still this is not a decisive objection ; for, as we hold proved, the self-conscious mind works in religious development and not the religious consciousness in abstraction from the rest.

In all consciousness, and so in the religious consciousness, three factors—thought, feeling, and will—are present. One of them may be dominant at a given time, but the others are never entirely absent. In the degree that each element gets its due, and is in concord with the rest, we experience inner harmony and satisfaction. A belief, for example, as *my* belief, must be pervaded by a certain emotional tone ; it must be something on which I can act, and only as acted on is it vigorous ; and finally, it must fit into and cohere with my

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 232.



system of ideas. Where there is opposition between the elements, where thought, for instance, is at discord with feeling, the mind is urged to gain a content in which they will be harmonised. The operation of this law of unity is distinctly to be recognised in the evolution of religion. It is the pressure of this immanent need which, in one form or another, brings about transition and change in the religious consciousness. To use a figure, the emphasis on one element at the expense of another creates an instability which precipitates movement. The satisfaction and completion which the religious spirit seeks through the divine object of its faith must be a life in which feeling, intellect, and practical endeavour are at one with each other. And while this is an ideal which in finite and temporal experience is never fully realised, yet man's incapacity to be satisfied with less impels him to transcend each partial satisfaction and seek a spiritual life fuller and more harmonious. In the interplay of these three elements, in the reaction against the excessive predominance of any one of them, in the persistent effort towards harmony, I think we find a psychological explanation of some of the characteristic features of religious evolution. At the risk of some repetition I will try briefly to justify and illustrate this statement ere I bring this essay to a close.

The predominance of feeling in the form of emotion at the origin and primitive stage of religion has been noted. Emotion and not intellectual interest engenders religious belief. But belief, however crude, exists as a starting-point for action, and can only maintain itself in and through the exercise of will. Hence religious belief takes form as a religious bond which is realised in conduct, and a cultus grows up with a ritual, fixed observances, and definite obligations. These become the nucleus around which religious sentiment gathers and by which it is in turn fostered. Thought is too slenderly developed to play an aggressive part. The savage's ideas of the world form no coherent system, and he is not pressed to revise his religious creed by any urgent demand of reason. Beliefs are modified simply through practical needs and interests, and the only test of religious loyalty is the performance of the prescribed acts. The emotional feeling which associates itself with ritual performance grows into a fixed sentiment which resists change. The meagre power of development revealed by tribal religion is due to the poverty of social and intellectual life and the consequent lack of diversity within the mind calling for reconciliation by progress. The cohesive force of sentiment giving support to existing religious practice has no strong disintegrating influences to withstand.

The importance of those social changes by which the nation takes the place of the tribe, and the accompanying expansion and deepening of self-consciousness, have been referred to. The content of the self has been enriched by a new range of practical ends and interests, and now finds itself out of harmony with the older and narrower form of the religious consciousness. National religion is the outcome of man's endeavour to bring the traditional religion into concord with the deepened and enlarged life of the self. At this stage thought attains a greater influence in the evolution of religion, and coherency of ideas is recognised to be an element of the spirit's inner satisfaction. In the first instance, the endeavour of thought is to give a kind of connexion and explanation to religious beliefs. Myths and theogonies indicate the rise of this tendency, which indeed goes back to the stage of tribal religion. Afterwards the gods are grouped and arranged according to eminence and function. When a religion has struck deep roots in the social life, and an influential cultus has grown up, thought proceeds to elaborate on a larger scale the meaning or reason for what is done: the result is religious doctrine. Theology represents the effort to set forth the truths implied in a religion in a connected body of propositions; it will give a rational and systematic form to belief, and so satisfy the mind's

desire for an intelligent presentation of its faith. Thought, however, as it grows more conscious of its power, inclines to free itself from bondage to the religious interest and to follow its own course in independence. An intellectual movement which thus begins within the sphere of religion, but gradually enters on an independent path, becomes in the end one-sided. In its anxiety to minister to the intellect it neglects the other religious needs. The outcome may be Rationalism, in its narrower sense, or Pantheism, according as the analytic or synthetic tendency prevails. In either case, the *Weltanschauung* which has been reached is incompatible with the adequate satisfaction of the spiritual self. And in the result we have a phase of religious belief, which, in exercising a purely intellectual appeal to men, fails to minister to other vital needs, and is superseded in the interests of a fuller satisfaction of the self.

But there is another aspect to the influence of thought on religion. In the foregoing case reason began by working from within the religious sphere, in this case it approaches it critically from without. At the higher stages of culture thought, in its own interest, investigates the nature of the world and man, and the outcome of this is science and philosophy. It is perhaps inevitable that the scientific and religious view of the world, developed as they



have been by different interests and in independence, should fail to coincide with one another. This discord begets controversy, and the religious interpretation of things is subjected to the criticism of thought at various points. But a lasting dualism between the two interpretations is impossible. For both science and religion fall within the unity of self-consciousness, and division between them cannot be accepted as permanent. The necessary endeavour of the mind to establish harmony within itself affects religious ideas which undergo modification and development. The resisting forces of sentiment and habit hamper and retard the process, and changes are usually slow; but they are not the less real though they come gradually.

The conservative function of feeling in religious evolution is not its only one. As an indispensable element of the religious consciousness it asserts itself against a one-sided intellectualism. Thought never coalesces with its object: the element of difference is essential to its movement. And this movement seems to have no end; the conclusion arrived at becomes only a starting-point for fresh processes. To the soul hungering for union with the object of its faith, the labour of thought seems tedious and external as it is unsatisfying. Theological and philosophical constructions of God appear by their method to cast a veil over the

spiritual substance of religion. The emotional nature cries for bread and reason offers a stone. Mysticism is the outcome of this craving; and in exalted or ecstatic emotion the sense of estrangement is done away and the worshipper feels himself at one with the Being he adores. But the goal is not really reached by a route so easy, and Mysticism in turn proves no abiding refuge to the spiritual seeker. Its neglect of practical effort and its disparagement of thought render it a partial satisfaction at the best. The spirit asserts its claim to a harmony of all its elements; and as Mysticism cannot respond to this demand, man cannot rest in it, and moves forward in quest of an ampler self-fulfilment. Here as elsewhere reaction is the result of one-sided development, and leads in turn to new development.

All that we can claim for the psychological interpretation of religious development is that it casts a certain amount of light on a very complicated process. The explanation it yields is partial, and the objective validity of the ideas involved is not determined. But our only hope of keeping in touch with the facts of religious evolution and of intelligently grasping them is to interpret them psychologically in the first instance—*i.e.*, in the light of the working of the human mind. We are under no obligation to fit the facts into intellectual

categories, or to make them square with abstract principles, when we follow this method. For the student of religion like other people is tempted to neglect facts which are inconvenient, and he is likewise inclined to use terms which imply an undue simplification. The latter fault, I fear, cannot be altogether avoided. We have, for example, been constrained to speak of the "religious consciousness" as it exists at a particular epoch or stage of development. Yet how hard it is, among the higher races at all events, to give an exact meaning to the phrase! Its connotation varies as you pass from one stratum of society to another. The Brahminism of the cultured Hindu is very different from that of the lowly ryot, and the Christianity of the speculative theologian is not the same as that of the day-labourer. Accordingly, when we speak of the "religious consciousness," at a particular stage of a race's history, feeling acutely the need of religious reform and development, in strictness the judgment applies only to the more enlightened members of society. The dull and ignorant hardly experience the need at all. And so development, when it takes place, is seldom or never a simultaneous movement of all elements in the social whole: only very slowly does the influence of new ideas filter down to the many. The "religious consciousness" of a people, if we are to

use the phrase, is thus a composite thing. And when we speak of it developing, it must be with the proviso that development is always partial and elements remain which are not fused in the process. Even when a high form of religion has long been the official creed of a country, here and there fragments of older belief and practice always survive.<sup>1</sup> And this may help us to understand better how, in certain circumstances, there may be a recrudescence of an elder phase of faith instead of advance to a higher. Taking a broad survey of history, we do not hesitate to regard religious development as a fact. But we would compare it to the seaward movement of a great and deep river, breaking into eddies in its course and containing backward currents.

The history of religion is the record of man's endeavour, ever and again renewed, to find, through union with an object above him, the harmony and completion for which his soul yearns. This object, from the first, is conceived to be something better than the common objects of experience, and grows in worth and dignity with the growth of man's inner life. Did faith realise all it seeks, there

<sup>1</sup> The Christianity of the ignorant peasantry in some Roman Catholic countries is really a blending of Christian and pagan beliefs, the latter never having completely died out.

would not be any development of religion. But man suffers disillusion, his gods disappoint him, and he must fare forth in quest of a better pattern of the things in heaven. As each stage of religion is found to yield only a partial satisfaction, the inner need of the soul urges it to clothe the religious idea in some higher form. And the very consciousness that a time-honoured faith has grown too narrow is a token that the mind has already some intuition of what is better. The term "dialectic movement" has misleading associations, and I would not wish to apply it to the evolution of religion: but religious progress may fairly be described as a transcending by the spirit of partial satisfactions in order to gain one which is full and abiding. Behind the varied manifestations of religion is the spiritual nature of man from which they issue. And the long history of religious faith and hope, of spiritual desire that never finds "an earthly close," suggests that the soul is inwardly related to the Infinite, the true source of its aspiration and the goal of its endeavour.

"Our destiny, our being's heart and home,  
Is with Infinitude and only there;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort and expectation and desire,  
And something evermore to be."

But to justify this belief, if it can be justified, we must quit the humbler but surer region of psychology and adventure ourselves in that loftier realm where Speculative Philosophy holds sway.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE DISTINCTION OF INNER AND  
OUTER EXPERIENCE





## ESSAY IV.

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WE may regard this problem from two points of view. In the first place, we may treat the question simply from the historical standpoint, and try to show the causes which led to the gradual separation of experience into two different spheres, an outward and an inward. From the nature of the case such an investigation must be largely psychological. It cannot in itself be taken as determining the ultimate validity of the distinction, though it may furnish facts which an epistemological theory must take into consideration. But, in the second place, we can try to determine the real meaning and value of the distinction in the ultimate nature of things; and this of course will be a problem for metaphysical discussion. A larger inquiry of this kind may furnish the conclusion that experience is fundamentally one, and that outer and inner are only different phases or stages in its development. Or it may lead us to conclude that the

contrast we make and act upon in our ordinary conduct is based upon a real difference which is more than one of degree. It will be convenient for us to consider first of all the genesis of the distinction.

For ordinary thought nothing seems more obvious than the difference between outer and inner experience. And one naturally assumes that a distinction, which he draws himself so readily, was always drawn with the same facility. But undoubtedly this cannot have been the case. If we distinguish two grades of experience, the former perceptual and therefore concrete and individual, the latter conceptual or generalised, it will only be at the second stage that the distinction is consciously made. The separation into two spheres, inner and outer, and the apt reference of experience to one or other of them, imply some development of the power of generalisation. To a merely perceptual consciousness the act of reflexion which marks off the percept from the perceiving mind would not be possible. Nevertheless we must guard against a rigid division of perceptual from conceptual experience. For the process of development is continuous, and in perception itself unconscious inference is present. Even in the higher animal self-conservation implies a rudimentary capacity to draw conclusions. Only, however, on

the level of conscious generalisation can individual experience receive a name and acquire a meaning. In his lectures on 'Naturalism and Agnosticism' Prof. Ward has justly insisted that conceptual thought is developed by intersubjective intercourse. In other words, it involves language, and therefore a social system. It is not as an isolated individual but as a member of society that man has universalised his experience. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that intersubjective intercourse could not create an intellectual realm apart, but has only developed to clear consciousness elements implicitly present at the perceptual stage.

If, then, the distinction of outer and inner experience only becomes possible on the level of conceptual thought, how and why was it made and elaborated then? Great certainty on such a matter can hardly be expected. I shall first examine an ingenious theory on this point which is originally due to R. Avenarius. It is termed the fallacy of introjection. The theory is reproduced by Prof. Ward in his lectures on 'Naturalism and Agnosticism,' and for convenience I shall take his statements in explanation. Substantially the process called introjection rests on an error which is due to common thought and language. Its essence "consists in applying to the experiences of my fellow-

creatures conceptions which have no counterpart in my own. . . . Of another common thought and language lead me to assume not merely that his experience is distinct from mine, but that it is *in* him in the form of sensations, perceptions, and other 'internal states.' . . . Thus while my environment is an external world for me, his experience is for me an internal world in him."<sup>1</sup> Consequently as we apply this conception to the experience of others, and they do the same for us, we are also led to apply it to ourselves, and so to construe our own experience in the light "of a false but highly plausible analogy."

The foregoing solution of the problem is plausible, but, as it stands, somewhat artificial and not quite convincing. Beyond doubt intersubjective intercourse has been necessary to develop a distinction which implies conceptual thinking. But the part in introjection assigned to an "involuntary error," due to common thought and language, is hardly intelligible, and appears to be superfluous. Evidently some psychical growth is presupposed in the act of interpretation by which common thought places the thoughts and perceptions of another *within* him. The process of *inreading* would be meaningless unless each individual had already

<sup>1</sup> Naturalism and Agnosticism, vol. ii. p. 172.

some key to it in his own experience.<sup>1</sup> Generalised experience implies a society, but it is not credible that men in society elaborated a distinction which did not somehow rest upon and appeal to the life-history of individuals.

What facts, then, led to the historical genesis of this distinction? One of the earliest would be the distinction of the body from surrounding objects. The beginnings of this separation take us back to the animal world. An animal would have no chance of survival in the struggle for existence if it did not note the difference between visual changes due to movement on its own part and those due to movement on the part of the object.<sup>2</sup> But man might have consciously differentiated his body from surrounding objects without recognising a soul or life within the body. The phenomena of sleep and dreams must have decisively contributed to this further result. In the lower culture dreams are regarded as real occurrences, and are attributed to a second or shadowy self within, which can leave the body and return to it. In giving clearness to, and in marking off, the experiences of this inner self, no doubt the utterances and testimony of other

<sup>1</sup> A similar objection is urged against Avenarius's view of introjection by W. Jerusalem, in his suggestive book, '*Die Urtheilsfunktion*,' *vid.* p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Stout, *Manual of Psychology*, p. 323.

individuals were highly important. Then the voice and the breath coming from within seemed a witness of the reality of the soul in the eyes of primitive men.<sup>1</sup> When conceptual thinking had given some fixity and generality to the notion of a soul, we may conjecture that the phenomena of error and illusion—facts which must have been soon noted because practically so important—were treated in the same way as dreams and attributed to the inner self, which of course was still conceived in a material way. A conscious contrast between objects given in presentation and objects reproduced in memory and imagination cannot be primitive, but when the differentiation was made the latter processes would naturally fall to be regarded as inward. We need only further mention the activity of the will, with the corresponding sense of a resisting environment, which would give force and vividness to the incipient distinction between an outward world and an inward self.

If our view be right, then, the distinction of outer and inner has its rude beginning in the animistic mode of thought: and animism, as Dr

<sup>1</sup> There seem to be reminiscences of ancient beliefs about respiration in the Ionic school. Anaximenes, for example, supposes the soul to be composed of air, ἡ ψυχὴ, φησὶν, ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὔσα συγκαταεῖ ἡμᾶς (Ritter and Preller, 20). Heraclitus speaks of it as a bright exhalation, ἀναθυμίασις. Cp. also the use of the Hebrew נִשְׁמָה, Gen. ii. 7; Job xxvii. 3.

Tylor and others have shown, is universal in the lower culture. Survivals among civilised races prove the presence among them long before of animistic beliefs. Avenarius supposes that the wide-spread phenomenon of animism is an extension to nature of the principle of introjection as applied to human beings. This is true if introjection means nothing more than the attribution of a soul. But the act of interpretation by which we place the thoughts and perceptions of another man within him as "internal states" is a somewhat developed one. It is not natural to make the cruder phenomena of animism depend on introjection thus conceived. We do better justice to the facts when we conclude that the distinction of outer and inner has its germ in the experience of individuals. The distinction was then developed by intersubjective intercourse, and the notion of an internal soul came to be applied not only to human beings but also to natural objects. The idea of "internal experience" is later, and grows out of the theory of a soul or finer second self within the body.

We find, then, this theory of a fallacy of primitive thought does not solve our problem. But though we trace the distinction to a basis in the actual experience of individuals, the larger question of its final validity still remains. For it is always possible that thought may misconstrue experience. And, so

far as we have gone, the division of our world into two spheres may or may not have a justification in the real nature of things. To this further aspect of the problem we now turn.

The expression outer and inner, when applied to experience, is to some extent metaphorical. For experience is not a process carried on within the head, nor are objects which appear external to us and to one another on that account outside consciousness. The distinction of inner and outer is one which falls within experience, and what we call an outward object and an inward idea are alike states of consciousness. That externality in space is not externality to mind was clearly brought out by Kant. It lay beyond Kant's mental horizon to discuss the distinction of outer and inner from the point of view of the historical growth of experience. But he accepts the distinction as justifiable and incorporates it in his theory of knowledge. That which is in space and time belongs to outer sense, that which is in time alone belongs to inner sense. And there is a necessary connexion between the two spheres, for that which is determined in space is determined from the side of the subject in terms of inner sense. By attending to the mental process by which all objects become possible the inward side of experience would be differentiated from the outer. But Kant afterwards saw that in putting



this interpretation on the common distinction he involved himself in difficulties which affected the consistency of his theoretical philosophy. For the inner life was perpetually changing, and we could not, as he thought, apply to it the category of substance as the permanent in time. Nor could that product of Kantian abstraction, the spectral pure ego, which was without content, serve as a permanent unity to which inner changes were referred.

Accordingly in the second edition of the 'Critique,' in the "Remark on the Principles of Judgment," we find Kant modifying his earlier view, and asserting that outer sense is presupposed in the conscious determination of ourselves in time. "It is by means of external perception that we make intelligible to ourselves the various successive changes in which we ourselves exist. . . . No change can possibly be an object of experience apart from the consciousness of something that is permanent, and in inner sense nothing that is permanent can be found." On this view it would be as logically subsequent to and contrasted with the determination of objects in space that the consciousness of inner experience is possible.<sup>1</sup> It is of course evident that

<sup>1</sup> Dr Caird thinks that the modifications in statement made by Kant, in dealing with this point in the second edition of his 'Critique,' indicate a movement of his mind, of which perhaps he was not him-

Kant in his treatment of this distinction is greatly influenced by the general theory of experience which he found it necessary to postulate. He could not admit that the self was real in the sense of maintaining its identity amid its changing activities. Hence the fact of external perception was judged necessary to give the contrast of permanence over against inner changes. Yet in Kant's theory it is impossible to understand how a pure form of perception like space, when somehow super-induced on an affection of sense which is mysteriously given, could, even with the necessary help of the schematised categories, produce those *localised* objects in space which fill the field of outer experience. It is conceivable that spatial and temporal relations may have been evolved out of sense-affection as a form which is implicitly contained in it; but it is not intelligible how pure forms of intuition could

self fully conscious, towards a larger and more consistent idealism ('Phil. of Kant,' i. 417, 614). I am not aware how far he is supported in this view by competent Kantian scholars. But I venture to think that Kant simply desired to give a statement of his critical idealism less open to objection and more carefully guarded than that which he had given in the first edition and in the Prolegomena. While he shows in the second edition that inner sense depends on outer sense, he also repeats that a phenomenon (*Erscheinung*) must be a phenomenon of Something (ed. 'Kehrbach,' p. 23). And though he admits that this reference of perception to a reality beyond it might not be necessary for *intellectual* perception (*op. cit.*, p. 32), yet it is no part of his theory that human intelligence is implicitly a consciousness which is capable of exercising an *intellectuelle Anschauung*.

be read into an alien matter. We refrain, however, from entering on a detailed criticism of Kant, for it will generally be admitted that his theory of knowledge is too unsystematic, too little penetrated by the notion of development, to be accepted as it stands. The motto *simplex sigillum veri* may not always be true, but the cumbersome and ill-adjusted machinery of the 'Critique' of itself provokes doubt and unbelief. Let us rather see how Kant's view on this subject is amended and developed by Dr Caird in his well-known treatise on the 'Philosophy of Kant.'<sup>1</sup>

Inner and outer experience we are there told are only different stages in the development of consciousness, which in another aspect is the development of the object. From the simplest determinations of the object in space and time we advance organically through the categories, or forms of judgment, to the world as completely determined by reason or self-consciousness, which if logically posterior is the real presupposition of the whole movement. The later and more highly articulated stage of this development is, properly speaking, inner experience, and it can only be distinguished from the consciousness of the world in the sense that it is that consciousness in a more completely developed form. But as each fact of

<sup>1</sup> Phil. of Kant, vol. i. p. 614 ff.

experience involves a reference to the self, so every outer experience will have its inner side. On the other hand, there is no inner experience which is not also outer, but we call it inner because the inner side is specially reflected on,—in other words we definitely recognise it as belonging to the self.

That there are elements of truth in this statement we do not seek to deny. Inner experience could not consistently develop except in relation to and in distinction from outer experience. And what we call an outer experience must also have an inner side. Nor can there be doubt that in the historical growth of experience its two aspects have advanced *pari passu*. None the less it is difficult to regard inner experience as merely outer experience at a more concrete and highly articulated stage of growth. If we set aside for the moment the question whether the distinction between them can be minimised in this fashion, we might still argue that, from the point of view of psychological development, it is inner experience which is primary and outer which is derivative. A developed self-consciousness is mediated by the consciousness of objects, but in the last resort we must postulate a direct and real activity of the self as the ground and beginning of all progress in experience. There is a sense in which we must be immediately

conscious of the operations of our own minds, and it is only as the result of inferential thought that we mark off a section of experience as outer. On this ground we should be disposed to modify Dr Caird's statement, and to treat inner experience as fundamentally the more simple and elementary. From this standpoint development begins from an active self in relation to an environment, which gradually distinguishes that environment from itself, and by the aid of conceptual thought defines a portion of its whole experience as external.

But the further question remains whether a distinction of degree between outer and inner experience covers all the facts. Dr Caird does not find anything in the object as determined in space which is not taken up into self-consciousness. The advance from outer to inner experience is just a process in which thought goes on to a more and more complete determination of things, till "it finds its own unity in the object."<sup>1</sup> It is hard to see how on this view the individuality and uniqueness which we discover in experience are explained at all. And in reference to the matter on hand this theory does not afford room for certain obvious facts. Inner and outer experience refuse to melt into one another in the way suggested. Mere reflexion on the inner side of an outer

<sup>1</sup> Phil. of Kant., vol. i. p. 470.

experience does not lead us to regard it as inner. A man, for instance, examining a statue critically in order to give his opinion of it, reflects on the impressions he receives and recognises them as his own. Yet he would not call his experience an inward one. Even more decisively would the same individual refuse to term outward his experience when, leaning back on his chair and closing his eyes, he thought out carefully the merits of several possible lines of action in order to select the best. And between the one experience and the other there would appear to him to be a qualitative difference. If every inner experience is outer as well, why do we habitually distinguish what we call subjective mental processes from the perception of outward objects, and contrast the one with the other? No doubt each outer experience has an inward side, and in virtue of this we sometimes wrongly interpret an inner state to signify facts in the external world. But we never mistake our perception of objects in space for a purely inward mental process. We find, therefore, a difficulty in accepting the view that the contrast of inner and outer experience rests entirely on a difference of degree in the development of consciousness. From this standpoint distinctions which are universally noted and acted upon are not adequately explained.

Against this it may be urged that inner and outer experience cannot be two diverse kinds of experience, for both are experiences of the one subject and are distinctions within the one consciousness. We have already admitted this. For the purely perceptual consciousness experience would be one, and the generalised distinction of outward and inward we know is made possible by conceptual thinking. But on the level of mediate thought, or rational inference, a new question presses itself upon us. We ask, Does the ultimate *raison d'être* of the distinction lie in the conscious selves who make it? Or is the inference reasonable that the experience which we name external gets its character from the implication of realities, which are not those of self-conscious subjects? In other words, Is outer experience the interpretation by self-conscious subjects of the action of reals which thought itself does not create? This we believe to be the true solution of the problem, and the explanation of the refusal of outer experience to be taken up into and merged in inner experience.

But before going further let us deal with an objection which is certain to be raised. The assumption that a trans-subjective real is implied in presented objects will be termed gratuitous. The apparent independence of the object, it will

be contended, is entirely the outcome of conceptual thought. For the application of the concept generalises the particular experience of perception, and treats it as an instance of a general relation: and this just means that "we are conscious we have before us an object which exists independently of its presentation in the particular case." On this view the seemingly independent outer object would be, if not relative to the individual thinker, yet relative to "consciousness in general,"—the rational self-consciousness which is the same in all human subjects.

In reply we may point out that conceptual thought depends for its individual reference upon perceptive experience, which is altogether special and concrete. As Kant himself granted, particular connexion in experience can only be learned from experience; laws of nature like gravitation cannot be deduced *a priori*. The ground, then, of the particular character of individual objects and the special relations in which they stand to one another can only be found in perceptual experience. It is indeed only by an act of abstraction that we can picture a purely percipient ego. But none the less this percipient consciousness must take note of, and be affected by, realities other than itself, in order that universal experience may have its specific side. For conceptual thought can only evolve out of per-



ception what is implicitly contained in it. That the perceptive consciousness is not aware of this reference of the percept to something beyond itself is no disproof of the fact that there is such a reference. If inferential thought compels us to postulate this reference, we must accept its verdict. For we open the door to a hopeless scepticism, if we refuse to admit that the real must conform to what is rational. I shall now give one or two illustrations to show that experience is not explicable unless we posit such a trans-subjective reality.

What we term external experience impresses us as containing an element of inevitableness. We are conscious that we have a share in directing the process of our thoughts or the movement of our limbs, but if we look to the heaven above or the earth around, the things we see we cannot help seeing.<sup>1</sup> The process of consciousness in the individual persons A, B, C, and D, may be very different at a particular time, but at a certain moment they all, without choice on their part, register an experience X,—say the appearance of the sun. Let us call the percepts of A, B, C, and D, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*; then *a*, *b*, *c*, *d* contain an implicit reference to *x*, which becomes for universal thinking X. But suppose they do not, and that X is an

<sup>1</sup> Berkeley, in his 'Principles of Human Knowledge,' distinguishes in this way perception from imagination.

abstraction elaborated out of  $a, b, c, d$ . Then there must be some reason in the series  $a, b, c, d$  why the abstract X should be evolved and not Y or Z. That is to say  $a, b, c$ , and  $d$  must each be so qualified that it accepts the interpretation X but excludes Y or Z. *Ex hypothesi* the cause of the specially qualified percepts  $a, b, c, d$  cannot be found in the previous condition of A, B, C, D. Nor can the abstract X give any common qualification to these percepts. Consequently the sudden manifestation to different minds, the consistency, the inevitableness of the experience we call X becomes quite unintelligible. And the facts remain inexplicable unless we admit that X is more than an abstraction, and is significant of something ( $x$ ) which has a reality for itself.

We put the same point in a somewhat different light when we direct attention to the fact that a person refers various experiences which he has had at different times to one object A. He has seen A frequently, and believes that if he complies with the conditions he will see it again. For popular thought this is the common, if fallacious, argument for the independent existence of A as it stands. Plainly, however, A in its unique setting cannot be deduced from the universal side of experience: nor is there any constraining reason in the individual himself why he should refer various

percepts to one and the same object A. That necessity comes from the side of the object, and A must stand for something which has had a determining influence on perception while it persists beyond it. Again, however inadequate the "laws of nature" may be as an explanation of concrete reality, yet they have validity in nature. They enable us to anticipate experience. An eclipse is predicted years before it happens, and it takes place exactly as predicted. Here we have a perceptual experience A furnishing the basis for a mathematical construction on which the forecast was made which was verified in perceptual experience B. Between A and B there is a process which need not come into consciousness at all, but must be real if B is to take place. The facts require us here to assume that the rational process by which B is deduced from A has for its counterpart an activity in things which thought interprets but does not create.

These are somewhat obvious instances, but we must not ignore their significance on that account. They all unite in enforcing the one lesson. We admit that the objects of outer experience are ideal constructions, but the facts compel us to add that these constructions can only be valid interpretations of a reality beyond. And in regard to the distinction between inner and outer experience, we

conclude that outer experience has the special character which attaches to it, because it directly implies that the subject is influenced by realities other than itself. The subject creates the distinction, but it does so as its interpretation of a real difference within the whole of its experience.

We must now try to form a more definite conception of this trans-subjective reality which we find it necessary to postulate. But we require to state our position in this reference with some care. It will not do to argue that in "physical events," as distinguished from the subjective sequence of ideas, we have the fundamental notion of externality.<sup>1</sup> For a 'physical event' is by no means a primitive datum of consciousness, but implies ideal construction; and it is absurd to suppose that the object as it exists for developed consciousness has the same significance apart from consciousness. Influenced by these considerations, J. S. Mill, as is well known, defined matter as "a permanent possibility of sensations"; and he explains that these "permanent possibilities" are "not constructed by the mind itself but merely recognised by it."<sup>2</sup> That which persists through changes and has capacities must in some sense be real; but Mill gives us no light as to how we are to

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Mind, N.S., No. 22, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Exam. of Hamilton, 6th edition, p. 239.

think of this reality. Nor, on the whole, has Kant's treatment of the subject been helpful. His "thing in itself" is at one point regarded as the positive source of sensations, but afterwards it is fined down to a mere limiting notion.<sup>1</sup> On neither view is the process of experience intelligible; and the conclusion seemed inevitable that philosophy must either return to the realism of Locke or advance to the absolute idealism of the post-Kantian thinkers. Without committing ourselves to this inference, we may frankly allow that the notion of "things in themselves" is inconsistent as well as useless. That which *ex hypothesi* possesses no knowable qualities can never be coerced into active relations with elements within conscious experience. If this were possible the original assumption must have been wrong, and the 'thing in itself' instead of being an impenetrable mystery has some affinity to consciousness. It might seem, then, that in trying to do justice to the facts of outer experience we have reached an *impasse*. On the one side it appears impossible to explain the facts of sense-perception if the object only exists as experienced. On the other side, if we postulate an unknowable reality behind

<sup>1</sup> With this we may compare the Aristotelian ἔλη which is sometimes spoken of as mere privation—στέρησις, and at other times is regarded as a positive means through which individuals are differentiated.

the things of sense, the unity of experience becomes inexplicable.

There is one sense in which no sober idealist refuses to admit that the object of experience has a reality of its own. Among the objects of our experience are other human subjects who, we inevitably infer, have a reality for themselves. Entering into our experience they can never be dissolved into it, but persist beyond it. This is an admission of some significance. For it means that we recognise individual centres of thought, feeling, and will, which decisively influence our consciousness, while they are independent of it. Here we have a principle of individuality as object, whose qualities, as recognised and interpreted by us, are represented in it by modes of its own activity. And when we have admitted this we are bound in consistency to go further. The law of continuity, as justly insisted on by Leibniz, forces us to regard the principle of individuality as having many stages and degrees of development. There is no break in the process by which life advances to consciousness and to self-consciousness; and the line of separation between organic and what we call inorganic matter is a vanishing one. Moreover, the psychologist is compelled to postulate the reality of a subconscious mental world, in order to explain phenomena which are manifest above the threshold of consciousness. And it is

reasonable to suppose that what is substantial in lower forms of life is one in kind (though very different in degree) with the conscious self in man. The latter would be the *ἐνέργεια* of which the former was the *δύναμις*. The real on which the ideational activity of the subject works in constructing the phenomenal world is, on this view, manifold spiritual substances or causalities; and the diverse qualities of the world, as given in experience, would be grounded in the various activities of these substances. The basis of the phenomenon termed matter is, on this theory, an inner life which is allied to our own consciousness.<sup>1</sup> The point we wish to urge, then, is that if you accept the world of intersubjective intercourse as a fact, you cannot restrict the principle to the relations of human individuals with one another. The interaction of individuals not existing merely for each other, but each for itself, must also be possible at lower stages of development, and there is no break in the process of advance from the lower to the higher. Hence there seems to be no valid reason why one should not admit that our so-called external experience involves the presence to our consciousness of manifold spiritual substances which are subjects at lower planes of development. A trans-subjective real is inferentially necessary to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paulsen, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, p. 387; Stout, *Manual of Psychology*, p. 54.

explain external experience ; and as we construe this real in terms of spirit and not of matter, we cannot be accused of setting up a dualism which makes knowledge inexplicable. The constructive work of thought has been already referred to. But thought cannot weave out of itself the content of experience. Something must be given, and the requisite *fundamenta relationis* are supplied by individual reals, by everything which possesses a degree of inner life and is for itself as well as for others. On this hypothesis we do justice to the primacy and centrality of the inner life, while we avoid the absurdity of reducing external experience to thought-relations, or of positing unknowable "things in themselves" behind the phenomena of sense.

We are now in a position to deal with a point of some importance which bears on the distinction of inner and outer. We mean the spatial reference which the distinction suggests. It may be assumed here that neither space nor time can be an empty form having a real existence, which is somehow applied to things.<sup>1</sup> They must, therefore, be in some way developed out of the content of experience itself : though not real in themselves, they must be evolved from some basis in reality, or to use a phrase employed by Leibniz, they must be *phenomena bene fundata*. This point of reference to reality can only

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Lotze, *Metaphysics*, bk. ii. chaps. i., iii.



be found in the interaction of those individual reals which are the ground of experience. The mutual determination of different spiritual substances would be represented from the standpoint of the perceiving subject under the form of space. And inasmuch as all experience must be construed in terms of the states of a subject for which both itself and other selves exist, we have time as the universal form in which the subject represents everything that happens. The long history of experience, and the generalisation which is its outcome, have served to invest space and time with a seeming reality and independence of their own. Only the unworkable nature of this conclusion and the contradictions in which it involves him, shake a man's natural faith in an opinion which seems so well founded. It would be too much to say that the theory we accept satisfactorily solves every difficulty, but it avoids a twofold error. For it treats neither space nor time as an independent real, nor does it reduce them to subjective mental fictions which cut us off from reality. They are representations in the subject, but they are also valid forms under which he interprets what is real.

From the standpoint of the historic development of experience the universal point of view is late. To the merely perceptual consciousness space and time would not be distinguished. The "selective in-

terest" or the practical need which turns the attention of the animal to space and time is concerned with the fact of movement which involves both. I refer to the temporal and spatial adjustments which are necessary to secure food, to seize prey, and to escape a foe. And it is from the association in man of active movement with the capacity of generalising that the differentiation and development of the ideas of space and time are due. The stages of this progress are however matter for psychological discussion. The final result is that space is hypostatized as a comprehensive whole which exists for itself, and which contains within it all that generalised experience treats as an independent reality. And language has given universal currency to the habit of speaking of what is believed to belong to the mind as *in* it and of what does not belong to it as *outside* it. Philosophic reflexion forces us to correct this abstraction. Both the spatial image and the object it contains are shown to belong to the mind as ideal constructions. Yet the common-sense point of view has a certain justification. For ideal construction is at root interpretation; and in the existence and activity of trans-subjective realities lies the possibility of our representing to ourselves the world of objects extended in space.

In the remainder of this paper I will try to answer certain objections which may be made to

the theory of reality we have accepted. You have admitted, it will be said, the presence of ideal construction in experience, why should you infer that so-called things are anything more than such constructions? A thing, however seemingly solid, is only the meeting-point of universal qualities or relations. In reply it may be asked, What is meant by a meeting-point? Evidently something which serves as a ground of identity and a bond of connexion between the qualities. These cannot fly loose and unclaimed in the world of experience. For if in a sense they belong to reality as a whole, yet they definitely pertain to particular determinations of reality and not to others. No doubt if we suppose that qualities are somehow attached as adjectives to isolated fragments of reality, we shall be proved inconsistent: the substance does not exist outside its attributes. But this objection does not apply when we conceive the 'support of qualities' after the analogy of the self, and construe the qualities themselves as representations in consciousness of the interaction between spiritual substances.<sup>1</sup> In a similar spirit it is said that to advocate the reality of things is to champion a mere fiction of the mind.

<sup>1</sup> It will be said that this is tacitly to admit that the individual is only qualified in virtue of its relations. I do not think so, for the qualities which become explicit through interaction point to positive differences in the monads themselves.

For the so-called thing is "ruined by thought": it goes to pieces under the touch of the speculative inquirer. Popular thought is certainly arbitrary in the way in which it applies the name; and we do not deny that things are sometimes mental fictions. A bag of grain might be called a 'thing,' while the name would not be given to the contents spread out upon the floor. But popular terminology does not concern us here; and we prefer to speak of individual reals which have a being for themselves. These are not due to ideal construction, but are presupposed by it, for without them thought would not have data on which to work. Obviously it will not be possible for us, with our present knowledge, to distinguish what is individual at levels of development far distant from our own.

But even in this sense, it is contended, the existence of individual reals cannot be maintained. The more we reflect the better we shall see that the significance of every predicate involves relations which force us to go beyond the individual itself; and the further we carry the process, the more unreal becomes the abstraction which remains. The fact is, as we learn, that an individual, or monad, is a fiction; it is reducible to a mere adjective which falls within the only true individual, the universe as a whole—the one ultimate reality.

As a result of this drastic argument, not only

'things' but conscious selves are 'ruined,' or at least they should be. For the reasoning employed, if valid, ought also to undermine the individuality and identity of the human self by dissolving it into a changing tissue of relations. The logical consequence of this argument must be to discredit any theory of reality which the human ego can form. Experience, on the contrary, testifies to a self which distinguishes itself from its states and maintains its unity in them. And it is after the analogy of the self that we conceive the individual reals which are the ground of the external world as perceived.

It will still be urged that the test of the truth of any theory is its coherency; in other words, if we can "think it out" consistently in all its bearings, we establish its claim to truth. And individual reals cannot be "thought out" without yielding up their reality to the absolute. That there is an element of truth in this contention we do not deny, and we will return to the point presently. But if you reduce individuals to mere appearance, and turn their identity into a fiction, in the ostensible interests of rational explanation you are ignoring facts which require to be explained. If, like Parmenides, you say that the *one* only is and the *many* are not, you have still to account for the illusion of 'not-being.'

Suppose for the moment that thought did compel

us to merge all individuals in the one perfect individual or absolute, I do not see how, on this supposition, we are to explain the appearance of individuality within the whole. For it can hardly be maintained that the illusion is due to the abstract method of ordinary thought which concentrates attention on one aspect of reality and neglects the rest. On this assumption the term might be applied or rejected according as the point of view changed. Yet there are centres of experience which claim to have a reality of their own, from whatever standpoint they are regarded. And one cannot understand how, if the theory of reality we are considering be true, such a claim could ever come to be made. But, it may be urged, the rights of logical thought are supreme, and to deny these rights is to pave the way to a scepticism of the worst kind. And certainly, if thought and reality are not ultimately consistent, philosophical discussion must be fruitless. Still it does not seem to me that the demands of coherent thinking forbid us to attribute reality to individuals which are not themselves absolute. If you assume that the individual is simply its relations, then it may consistently be deprived of any being for itself in the ultimate system : but the validity of the conclusion is spoiled by the inadequacy of the premises. The self which thinks, and so relates itself to other objects and

objects to one another in the relational form of consciousness, is not the whole self. And though we are bound to accept the relational system as a valid interpretation by thought of what is given in experience, we are not entitled to say that the whole self of experience is exhausted by this interpretation. Thought presupposes experience, and in some form experience must have preceded the genesis in time of intellectual activity. It is just because experience is richer than thought that a self, or individual centre of experience, is, in Prof. Ward's phrase, a *fundamentum relationis*.

A few further observations on this point may be made. Mr Bradley has justly remarked that the subject in a judgment must always have a reality beyond the predicate. To reduce the two sides to a fundamental identity as aspects of one thought-content is to destroy the possibility of predication.<sup>1</sup> And this must apply to the judgment of self-consciousness as well as to that of perception. Thus, when we predicate thought of the self, the judgment is made possible by the fact that the self is also a centre of feeling and will, and cannot be dissolved in the pure unity of thought. This distinction makes the judgment significant; and self-consciousness is an illustration of the principle that the object of thought is more than thought. On the

<sup>1</sup> Appearance and Reality, p. 170.

other hand, all three elements are embraced in the self as subject of experience, and so the self is not a reality beyond experience in this wider sense. We are not, therefore, entitled to argue that the subject of experience is equivalent to thinking-subject, and on this ground to claim that the object is thought and nothing more. The reality to which I refer my states of consciousness must always be more than these states. We have already tried to show in what way we think this reality is to be conceived.

It would be futile, however, to deny that those who believe the hypothesis of individual reals to be justifiable, and even necessary, are in a position of great difficulty when they try to explain their place and meaning in the ultimate system of things. Prof. Ward, for example, in his lectures on 'Naturalism and Agnosticism' accepts the principle of individual selves or centres of experience, but it is somewhat difficult to understand the relations in which he conceives these centres to stand to the Absolute. God, we are told, is "the living Unity of all," and behind the development of experience there can only be "the connecting conserving acts of the one Supreme."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Prof. Ward admits real contingency in the divine working, but it is the contingency "not of chance but of freedom."

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 280, 281.



In his view the divine Unity which comprehends all is evidently not that of a system where all the elements are determined in relation to one another and to the whole. A view like the foregoing requires a good deal of explanation, and if it obviates certain difficulties, it also exposes itself to certain criticisms. In any case, it would have been interesting and valuable to have had a more explicit statement on this point from so able a thinker. For it is just on this question of the relation of individuals which are real to the Absolute, that opponents press home their arguments most strongly. Thus it is urged, "Those who cling to the idea that there is an absolute principle of individuality in man and in other finite substances, seem necessarily to be led to a denial of all real connexion or relation between such substances."<sup>1</sup> It must be granted, of course, that there can be only one absolute Being, and a plurality of *res completæ* is impossible. To claim such absolute reality for individuals would be suicidal, seeing that each is only an element in the universe, and all must find a place and receive a meaning in a coherent system. For this we require a supreme connecting and organising activity which is present in all individuals. Lotze tries to satisfy this need by saying that all substances "are parts of a single

<sup>1</sup> Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 83.

real Being.”<sup>1</sup> Yet if this statement be accepted as it stands, it does not appear possible to resist the inference that the Pluralism, which philosophy found it necessary to postulate at an earlier stage, is only a temporary hypothesis, and is superseded when thought rises to the final synthesis. The use of the term ‘substance’ in this connexion has been objected to. Wundt, for example, criticises it, and would substitute for it causality or activity.<sup>2</sup> But it is not clear that the material associations which, as he points out, cling to the one word are absent from the other. Moreover, if we are to think of activity at all, it must be as the activity of something real; and we do not mean more when we use the word substance to denote a centre of experience. In his ‘Microcosmus’ Lotze has stated somewhat differently his attitude to the ultimate Unity which philosophy strives after. “It seems to me that philosophy is the endeavour of the human mind, after this wonderful world has come into existence and we in it, to work its way back in thought and bring the facts of outer and inner experience into connexion so far as our present position in the world allows.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics* (Eng. trans.), vol. i. p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> *System der Philosophie*, p. 427. Paulsen’s position on this point is, I think, just. He advocates the use of the term *substance* here, only demanding that we first make clear what we mean by it. Atomistic associations are, of course, out of place.

<sup>3</sup> *Microcosmus* (Eng. trans.), vol. ii. p. 718.

The note of caution here is justifiable. For our thought is necessarily infected by spatial and temporal metaphors. And space and time on any view cannot adequately express the nature of the Absolute. We are inclined to forget that categories which are valid within experience cannot be employed in the same way to the ultimate conditions of experience. And it is evident that no category at our disposal is entirely adequate to explain the relation of the Absolute to the individual.

The result of our discussion then is, that the facts of outer experience lead us to infer that the individual subject is here in direct relation with a system of other-selves. In inner experience, again, the subject's own activity is primary, and relation to other-selves is only indirectly implied. But though we claim that the monads are real, the reality which pertains to each individual can only be secondary or derivative. For the individual has its determinate character elicited through interaction with other monads, and the whole system presupposes an organising ground and principle of unity. If we desire a figurative expression of this unity in difference, perhaps we might find it in the connexion of soul and body. In an organism the separate parts, or members, are essentially related to one another, while each has its specific function in

the whole. The soul, again, or the *ἐντελέχεια*, to use Aristotle's word, is the presupposition of the organism and the ideal principle which gives it meaning and truth. By some such analogy we may conceive of the Absolute as immanent in all individuals, yet allowing to each a definite function and degree of reality in the whole, while its own being is not lost in the process of finite experience. For that the universe is a coherent whole is a presupposition both of thought and of ethical action.

A final observation may be added.

In any view we take of the ultimate Unity, we must not ignore the world of ethical and spiritual values. For the facts of moral and religious experience have as good a claim to be taken into account as the facts of science. The tendency to "excessive unification," which Aristotle objected to in Plato, has always been a danger to which philosophy is peculiarly liable. And a philosophy which, in the interests of system, undermines the moral-responsibility of the individual and treats religion as an illusion, lays itself open to the charge of explaining away what it cannot explain. The intellectual necessity we are under of striving after unity in all experience must be conditioned by the ethical necessity by which we postulate that the Supreme Reality satisfies our spiritual nature. There can be no final dualism between the two spheres any more than

there can be between inner and outer experience. But the Absolute, be it remembered, does not merely explain an aspect of the world, but the world as a whole. And a thinker whose outlook is catholic will try neither to ignore nor to misconstrue any phase of experience in order to secure unity of system.



ESSAY V.

THE ULTIMATE BASIS AND MEANING  
OF RELIGION





## ESSAY V.

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To determine the ultimate basis of religion, the ground in reality which conditions its manifestation, is at once the most difficult as it is the most important part of our subject. At present the tendency of those who know is to say little, and that not dogmatically, on this matter. Nevertheless it is clear that, if we refuse to face the enterprise, we surrender at the outset any claim to put a final interpretation on the religious consciousness and its development in time. One reason which no doubt deters students of religion from embarking on ontological speculations is the difficulty of verifying them. For here we have not simply a definite group of religious phenomena, psychological or historical, which we have to connect together and interpret. In this case it is more easy to test a theory from point to point by bringing it into contact with facts of experience. But when we pass to consider the ultimate ground and meaning of religious ex-

perience as a whole, the process of verification is much more difficult. For, needless to say, the thinker cannot rise to an absolute principle, and then descend again to the region of temporal experience, and exhibit this experience in its diverse phases as necessary stages or moments in the unfolding of that principle. The only feasible test of our speculations must be a less rigorous one. We can but ask that they give a coherent view of the facts in their broad features, and that, to some extent at least, they impart a satisfying meaning to them.

The word experience is general, and the thing itself has manifold forms. And the phenomena of religion, though regarded in their entirety, only make part of a larger whole. In other words, they constitute a special phase of general experience. The task of interpreting the latter falls to philosophy in the wider sense of the word. Metaphysics has to investigate the meaning of experience: it has to bring out its implications and to show the ultimate grounds and presuppositions on which it rests. Philosophy endeavours to carry out the principles thus reached, so as to make it clear that the universe, or experience in all its aspects, is a coherent and continuous whole. Even though there be irreducible elements in experience which refuse to be fused by the thought-process, philosophy cer-

tainly cannot assume this to begin with, and can only follow persistently the plan of trying to think things out. The test we apply to the *Weltanschauung* which it offers us will be the internal consistency of its principles as well as their consistency with the world as experienced. Do things both in their individuality and their connexions receive their due in the interpretation which is put upon them?

As we pointed out in an earlier essay, the Philosophy of Religion, which is engaged with a special phase of experience, must always be dependent on general Philosophy, which deals with the larger problem. On the other hand, owing to the limitation of its outlook, it has the phenomena of the religious consciousness more fully and directly in view. This concentration of interest makes it less likely to sacrifice the claims of the part to those of the whole. Hence the Philosophy of Religion, alive to the large and systematic aims of Philosophy, but also cognisant of the needs of its own special subject-matter, seeks to mediate between the demands of the speculative and the spiritual mind. It goes without saying that the Philosophy of Religion is inspired by no apologetic interest: its exclusive interest is the truth. But it recognises that religion is a normal aspect of human life, and has to be interpreted by the

philosopher. With perfect fairness it seeks to bring the point of view of reason into comparison with that of faith, and dispassionately asks how far they can be reconciled. And even though he believes that the result of the inquiry can only be provisional and not final, the thinker who cares for the interests of reason, and likewise appreciates the claims of religion, will not wish to evade the problem which a Philosophy of Religion presents. In entering on the task he is in a sense only honestly trying to come to an understanding with himself.

The need of an inquiry of the kind is both real and urgent, and the modern world has in the main recognised this. Both Philosophy and Religion set before us a view of the universe, and as a rule their views are in somewhat sharp contrast. Philosophy introduces us to a reasoned theory of reality, and tries to unfold in logical sequence the steps which lead to its conclusions. Religion, again, is not interested in rigid deduction, and it encourages its votaries to believe where they cannot prove. Nor does it hesitate to follow the less rigorous method of analogy in its interpretation of the ground of experience, and it upholds the claim of faith that the supreme Reality must satisfy the needs of man's spiritual nature. Religion centres in spiritual experience, and the religious man finds

the root of this experience in a personal relation between himself and God. He indeed thinks and speaks of God as the first Cause of all things, but yet for him God is not merged in that which He produces. He can fitly be addressed in prayer as 'Thou'; and while His will is manifested in the world, He is not identified with the world. For Pantheism, though it frequently appears in the history of religious development, is not a normal expression of the religious consciousness. But when we pass from Religion to Metaphysics a change in the atmosphere is apparent. The philosopher is chary of using human analogies in reference to the ultimate ground of things, and sometimes deliberately rejects them altogether. Instead of God we hear rather of Substance, the Absolute, the Idea: and even when the time-honoured name is used, the connotation is commonly very different. The God, for example, of Spinoza and the God of the average worshipper stand for conceptions which hardly have any common content. The source of this diversity of meaning and tendency is the difference of the interest which engrosses the speculative and the religious mind. The philosopher aims at unification of experience; a final dualism in his eyes spells defeat; and he is anxious to show that the differences in experience, which prompt the ordinary man to rest in dualism, can ultimately

be resolved into a monism. So for him the Supreme Reality is to be found within the world-process rather than without it. The religious interest, in contrast, centres in a personal relationship between the human and the divine. The existence of this relationship seems incompatible with a Deity who has no reality apart from the process of experience in which He is manifested. Accordingly, the religious spirit clings to the belief that God somehow transcends the world.<sup>1</sup>

It is natural, then, that the view of the world presented by philosophy should distinguish itself somewhat sharply from that of religion. And as religion lays claim to be true as well as philosophy, it is not surprising that the attitude of the one to the other should often be hostile. On the one side, religion objects that philosophy does not give due heed to the demands of the spiritual consciousness, that it is dominated by an interest too prevailingly intellectual, and that, in consequence, it sets up pale abstractions in the place of living reality. On the other side, philosophy retorts that religion unfairly exalts one aspect of experience, that it evades the duty of examining its presuppositions and testing their consistency with the larger whole of things, and that it uses analogies without consider-

<sup>1</sup> We are, of course, speaking here of religion in its highly developed forms.

ing whether they are really applicable or not. So we often find philosophical thinkers speaking of religious beliefs with a certain tone of superiority and condescension. For these beliefs, they hold, are at best only figurative thoughts which must be criticised and transformed ere they can seriously claim to be true. And it is one of the blessings of a philosophical culture, that it delivers the mind from bondage to those idols which the common people take for truth. Religious persons, again, are prone to regard philosophy and its obstinate questioning with suspicion and dislike. Even when it approaches, extending the olive branch, they mistrust it, and doubt the wisdom of an alliance. For some of them complain, and not without some show of justice, that although philosophy uses the same words it does not mean the same thing as they do. Others are bold to declare that the truths of faith are of a different order from those of reason, and do not require to be buttressed by thought even if that were possible. Hence a Philosophy of Religion, in so far as it seeks to bring about a *rapprochement* between the two, is not likely to win the unqualified approval of either. On the side of religion, at all events, there are reasons why one should not expect too much. For the latter has, without due criticism, as the philosopher is inclined to think, taken religious experience and

historic facts as a basis on which to build its own interpretation of the world, which it terms theology. Yet whatever elements of value theology may contain—and that it does contain them we do not in the least deny—it is too much to expect the philosopher to accept its conclusions as they stand. Theology sets out from authoritative presuppositions, while philosophy requires that they be reasoned. And the speculative thinker does not find in the theologian's results either the internal consistency, or the harmony with the larger whole of experience, which he sets before him as a standard. It is therefore inevitable that the view he develops should call for some concessions on the part of those who hold the traditional doctrines which have become associated with religion. To the theologically-minded person this criticism will commonly appear too drastic, and the critic's reverence for the past too slender. Ignoring that process of change which is 'without observation,' and which makes a 'form of sound words' mean one thing to an earlier and another to a later age, he sees in the philosopher only the representative of an ephemeral fashion of speculation who sets himself to judge venerable and time-tried doctrines. Such an objection is to be expected, and the religious philosopher must be prepared to hear it urged against his results. At the same time, he



does well to remember that his own gospel is not likely to be the end of all wisdom. New thoughts grow out of the growing experience of the world; and the speculations which represent the mind of one generation have to be remoulded to satisfy another. If a theology becomes old and needs to be reconstructed, a philosophy is not exempt from the same law of progress.

With these preliminary remarks we go on to indicate the method we propose to follow in this important part of our investigation.

To interpret religion speculatively signifies that we try to show its ultimate basis, and to explain its meaning and function in the real universe. The question is not simply how religion works, how it is related to other activities, and what its value is in the life of individual and people. However profitable such an inquiry might be, at the end of it we should still be ignorant of the final truth about religion, and whether it had any ultimate justification. We have to go deeper than this, and must try to show, if we can, what is the reality which lies behind and gives meaning to the phenomena of religion. The problem in technical language is ontological: and plainly the reality which belongs to religion can only be reached through the determination of the nature of reality in general. Now it seems to me that

the most fruitful line we can follow in an investigation of this kind is to argue back inferentially from experience to its ground. By ground is not meant cause in the purely scientific sense, but those fundamental and real conditions which lie behind the realm in which cause and effect operate. But experience is a large word, and it has two generally recognised aspects, the subjective and the objective. To these correspond the spheres of Psychology and Cosmology. Our regressive movement towards a common ground must have regard to both aspects of experience. We must keep in view alike the facts of nature and of mind in attempting to define the character of their ultimate basis.

It will be said that we are here making an assumption — the assumption that the ordinary distinction between subject and object has some warrant in the nature of things. This is true, but we base our right to do so on the epistemological discussion in the preceding essay. It was there argued that outer experience implied realities which were not created by the perceptive subject. The point now before us is the nature of the ground which these substances presuppose. But to whatever result the discussion of this problem may lead us, it will not be a final and complete determination of the World - Ground. We must

bring our result into relation with the implications of inner experience, with the realm of self-consciousness and those personal aspirations and ethical values which form an essential aspect of the self-conscious life. The result will show how far we can hope to determine the final ground of all experience, alike from the point of view of form and of content. We shall then have to consider the ground in the definite aspect in which it is the basis of the religious consciousness. The last step will be to suggest a view of the meaning of religion and its development, founded on the conclusions we have come to on the nature of the finite spirit and its relation to God, the ultimate ground of all things.

Our first task, then, is to examine the implications of outer experience, and try to determine the nature of the reality which it presupposes as its ground and condition. The argument in the preceding paper led us to the view that experience is a historic development, in which we can distinguish sensitive, perceptual, and conceptual stages. Only at the latter level, and as the result of the generalised thinking which intersubjective intercourse makes possible, is the universal distinction of inner and outer elaborated and fixed. But the distinction drawn by subjective thinking is the interpretation of a real difference. The objective world must be

more than a generalised notion which takes form as the result of the interplay of many minds. If not, obvious facts of experience remain unexplained. The question then arises, What are the realities which we must presuppose are involved in the presentation in experience of that which we call nature? As we saw already, we cannot accept the scientific conception of atoms—or for that part the more recent analysis of the atom into electrons—as the answer. For that which implies the process of ideal construction cannot at the same time be that which lies beyond it. And everything which has dimensions and sensible qualities involves the work of mind. The fact of an external world seemed best explained on the theory that it meant the existence of spiritual centres of experience, continuous in character with the human ego, but standing at lower levels of development. A system of monads acting and reacting on each other, and giving rise in self-conscious minds to the interpretation of reality as a variously qualified world of things, we took to be the basis both of perceptual and conceptual experience.

We shall not repeat the arguments by which we sought to defend this pluralism against objections more or less serious. Our aim now is to find out how far we can determine the ultimate ground of such a system of spiritual substances. The phrase

“spiritual substance” is used here, it will be recollected, for that which is a centre of experience, and which in some way has a being-for-self. To call these centres causalities or activities, as Wundt does, is rather a matter of terminology than of real difference in meaning. For we cannot think of activity without thinking of that which maintains itself and has a being for itself. A formless and indeterminate activity could not explain anything. If represented relations and qualities imply the interaction of reals, these reals must be something for themselves ere they can be something to one another. Relations without a basis of relation melt away in the unsubstantial void. But while the monad is not constituted by its connexion with other monads, its character can only become explicit by its interaction with them. Development of reality as experience is not of the abstract unit, but is always by a synthesis, and the reference to self becomes explicit and fully defined through reference to another. But while interaction thus gives articulation to the self, it cannot create those centres of experience which are necessary to the development of experience.

When we speak of the *relations* of the reals to one another, we must bear in mind that the term implies ideational activity, and this has its root in the action and reaction of substances. In other

words, the growth of experience is based on the activity which exists between its real elements. To call this process an interaction of wills, as has been done, is no doubt, from one point of view, open to objection: for the term *will* has a specialised psychological meaning, and implies a process of mental construction. But we must speak of the centres of experience as *active*, and the right to employ the notion of activity in this connexion has been called in question. The point is important, for in the long-run our title to speak of God as active is involved in it. The gist of the objection to the use of the term in *Metaphysics* is, that it is only a working conception in the domain of psychology. It contains, we are told, assumptions and involves contradictions; and while it may be conveniently used to describe psychological phenomena, there is no ground for treating it as ultimately real. Now it is true that the word activity, as we use it in reference to ourselves, stands for something more than we are immediately conscious of. The feeling of innervation, the sense of power going from us into act, is not simple, but implies experience, and so expectation of the result. That is to say, it involves generalisation. But all this may be true and yet the idea of activity need not rest on an illusion. Indeed the fact that we use, and cannot help using, the idea, is so far evidence that it stands for something

real. Deny it of the self, and you are compelled to attribute it to the ideas which belong to the self. Suppose for the moment that activity is no more than a mental fiction which we find it convenient to employ, then our experience is reduced to a series of presentations without purposive connexion, and we ourselves are only the ineffectual spectators of a drama in which we fondly dream that we play a part. It is certainly in point to urge that our whole practical life becomes unintelligible on this assumption. If there could be such a thing as a self purely passive, the development of experience in it would be impossible. On the other hand, it may well be that the reason why we are not able to know ourselves immediately as active, just lies in the fact that we are dealing with something primitive and inseparable from experience in any form. We cannot instinctively distinguish the feeling of activity from that of pure passivity, for the latter is not a possible experience; and when we try to analyse the notion, the thing itself is presupposed by the process of analysis. I cannot see that because the *concept* activity implies mental construction, it is therefore not based upon what is real: this would only be a valid inference if such construction could be shown to involve what is fundamentally false. It will, I suppose, be agreed that the self, as we habitually use the term, is an

ideal construction : if for that reason you say it is a fiction, then your very assertion cannot ultimately be valid. The pressure of practical life always corrects such vagaries of thought. And as regards activity, we cannot banish it from the real universe without inconsistency.

It would no doubt be inconsistent to transfer the notion of activity from the region of experience to a system of dead elements ; for there is no inner connexion between personal experience and that which has no being for itself. The objection does not hold in the case of a system of monads conceived as centres of experience, though on a lower level than that of thinking subjects. In such a system action and passion express the nature of beings which are for themselves. For even passivity is not intelligible apart from reaction and self-maintenance.

If, then, we have so far vindicated our right to speak of active spiritual substances, we must now ask, What is the ground of their interaction ? What makes it possible ? For the argument has been that the centres of experience have a being of their own : they are not abstract qualities, or mere appearances, which are really merged in a whole. How, then, do individuals come to be manifested as an interconnected system ? As is well known, Leibniz refused to conceive the problem in this



way. Following the lead of a logic according to which in every true proposition all predicates were analytically contained in the subject, he affirmed that each monad contained within itself the source or ground of all its changes. No monad interacts with another, but each ideally represents the universe. And though Leibniz extends his principle of Sufficient Reason in order to find a ground for the monads in God, the inference under these circumstances lacks cogency, and it is difficult to see what essential office Deity fills in a universe so constituted. But the Leibnizian conception of the monad is an impossible one. How a simple substance can evolve from itself the countless differences of experience we are not told. And the whole work of intersubjective intercourse in building up experience must be interpreted, on this theory, in so artificial a way as to be quite unconvincing, not to say incredible.

If it be agreed that we cannot eliminate the idea of interaction between the spiritual substances which are the basis of the material world as experienced, we may now go on to ask, What are the implications of the process? In this way we shall try to carry out our regressive movement towards the ultimate ground of things. It will be obvious that we are following the line laid down by Lotze, whose carefully reasoned statement has had an

important influence on subsequent thought. The view which commends itself to us may be made clearer by considering the adequacy of the solution offered by Lotze. In his 'Metaphysics' he examines the idea of a *transeunt* operation—the passage of an influence from one independent real to another—and finds it unintelligible and contradictory.<sup>1</sup> It will not be denied that the transference of some inexplicable force or energy from one thing to another is a fiction of the mind. Every effort we make to think out what the action of one thing on another means, ends with the confession that the reals between which the operation takes place cannot be absolutely independent of each other to begin with. Therefore, argues Lotze, we must abandon the notion of independent substances. Take the two substances A and B, the change of A into Aa is accompanied by a change of B into Bb. And this is only explicable if the real being of both A and B is M, and if the change in M called  $\alpha$  evokes as compensation that modification of M we call  $b$ . What popular thought regards as an external process between A and B is reduced on examination to an immanent operation in M. As Lotze himself says, "The Pluralism with which our view of the universe began has to give place to a Monism."<sup>2</sup> It is thus

<sup>1</sup> Metaphysics (Eng. trans.), bk. i. chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., i. 165.

difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the last resort the monads are virtually reduced to qualifications of the one real Being.<sup>1</sup> Lotze certainly says that, if interaction is to be possible, all elements "must be regarded as parts of a single and real being." At the same time, his persistent endeavour is to maintain the uniqueness and individuality of everything that can be called a self. But if we are to hold to the latter principle, then the interaction between A and B must be something for both A and B. Yet the nerve of the foregoing argument is that the interaction takes place because A and B are parts of the same Being M, in which alone the process has meaning. It is conceivable that some one might urge that the difference exists within the unity, but that conceptual thinking cannot explain *how* it does so. But though this plea is not always to be made light of, in the present case it is not satisfactory. For the difficulty is due to the exclusive claim of the hypothetical M, put forward in explanation of the fact of interaction.

If we are to believe a recent writer,<sup>2</sup> this *impasse* is the natural doom which overtakes realism in every form. Either all is unity, or else there are

<sup>1</sup> Cp. the remark of Mr F. H. Bradley in his 'Appearance and Reality,' 1st edition, p. 118, "the attentive reader of Lotze must, I think, have found it hard to discover why individual selves with him are more than phenomenal adjectives."

<sup>2</sup> Royce, *The World and the Individual*, vol. i. p. 112.

"no linkages." Here the most wary voyager can steer no middle course between Scylla and Charybdis. The only choice is an all-inclusive unity or eternally isolated individuals. To this one might reply that it is no doubt possible so to state the case for realism, that there would seem to be no escape from one horn or the other of the dilemma which is here thrust before us. But many realists will fail to recognise their own likeness in the picture which Prof. Royce has drawn for them. In point of fact, few would seriously contend that individual reals, on whatever level of development, are eternally complete and self-sufficing. The self-sufficing individual in any form is a fiction: the connexion of individuals with one another shows that they all depend on a common ground, and this makes possible that lively interaction by which they evolve their distinctive character. The special point we have to consider is, whether what Prof. Royce terms *linkage*, or as we put it, interaction, is not possible save on the assumption that the ground is a unity in which all individuality is really absorbed. For, as a consequence, this in its turn renders unintelligible the distinctive difference which separates the experience of one self from that of another. To put the matter more definitely. We postulate individual reals or spiritual substances to avoid the inevitable con-

tradiction of supposing that nature is only an ideal construction. The action and passion out of which experience grows must be viewed in terms of the inner life of these substances, otherwise we remain outside the region of individual experience altogether. And on the other hand, interaction between centres of experience would be impossible, if there were not some inner bond of connexion between them. A ground which is merely external does not explain anything. For then in postulating M to explain the interaction of A with B, you leave unexplained the interaction of both A and B with M. The conclusion appears unavoidable that the World-ground must in one aspect be an immanent one, and is somehow present in all the individuals which it connects. But again, if in the interests of unity you merge the differences in an identity, you reduce them to an illusion, or at all events to an appearance; and you leave yourself unable to give any valid reason why there should be even the semblance of individuality in the universe. This objection may be pertinently urged against a system like that of Spinoza, and against the views of Mr Bradley in our own day. An Absolute such as Mr Bradley presents to us may fulfil the office of a *cul de sac* into which intractable matter is flung; it certainly does not offer any consistent explanation of the evolution of

experience. After all, we live and act sufficiently well in the world ; and if thought finds the simplest processes of experience riddled with contradictions, the presumption is that there is something wrong with the thought. Nor is it more than a *tour de force* to tell us that the shreds and tatters left by dialectic are, in a way we can never understand, woven into a harmony in the Absolute. In the interests of experience itself we must therefore refuse to follow this course.

The problem which the facts set before us is this. Can we think of a ground which is at once immanent in all individual centres of experience, and at the same time does not reduce these centres to mere appearance? Is it possible to conceive a connecting activity which explains the interdependence of spiritual substances and still leaves to them a being of their own? This condition can only be fulfilled by a ground which is both immanent and transcendent, a ground which, while it unites individuals, has also a being for itself, and so always distinguishes itself from the elements it connects. And if there be evidence of such a type of connexion, we need not hesitate to refer to it in the solution of our problem, even though we cannot think out in detail its mode of operation. But at the same time I grant that a type of unity, illustrated in experience, cannot adequately describe

that which is the ground of experience. With this proviso I go on to suggest that in the idea of soul there is a helpful notion for the purpose we have in hand. To some, perhaps, the conception will seem threadbare, calling to mind the superficial philosophy of Pope :—

“ All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body nature is and God the soul.”

We shall, however, only be antiquated and superficial if we take up the idea blindly and use it without examining it to discern its true import. We have nothing to do here, it may be well to say, with any theories about the nature of soul in the narrower sense. For we are now using the word in its broader meaning, in its biological and not in its theological significance. What we are mainly concerned with is the kind of unity, the sort of interconnexion disclosed in living things. In its simplest forms life involves a central activity, which is revealed in the process of assimilation and the capacity to react on stimulus. There is a sense in which all life - activity is purposive, for it means selection and subordination of elements in the fulfilment of function, and it implies the power to reject what is alien to the unity which it maintains. The question of consciously willed ends does not of course arise here : and if we term the central activity *will*,

because it is purposive, we must bear in mind that we are dealing with something on a lower level than human volition. The fact remains that, from the humblest unicellular organism to the most complex and highly differentiated animal body, a central will or soul connects and dominates all the elements. If you assert there is no such principle, then you have the hopeless task of explaining how, by mechanical action and reaction, the highly specialised organs of the body have become reciprocally means and end to one another, and subserve the interest of the whole. The attempt to solve the problem of organic growth in this way fails, because it has to assume what it ought to explain. In the simplest form of life an immanent activity is involved, and it is this central will which builds up the organism. This active principle brings all the elements into closest interaction, and yet allows to each organ its own peculiar function and meaning in the whole. It at once gives the parts their systematic arrangement, and operates as the inward bond between them. We cannot indeed make clear to ourselves in thought the precise way in which this interconnexion is realised: we are not able to lay bare the *modus operandi* of the inner activity. Certainly we do not do so by generalising and calling the whole process a category. Nevertheless, it is important to know that experience contains this



type of unity, and we are justified in considering how far it may offer us suggestions in dealing with the problem we have before us. For we are seeking a principle which will connect the various individual centres of experience without at the same time suppressing their individuality. And in life the central will, which has a reality of its own, so correlates the changing elements on which it works that a relatively stable system emerges, in which each organ has an individual office and is likewise intimately linked to all the rest. In other words, the soul is not an expression simply for the interior harmony of the living being, but the formative ground which brings about the harmony. It is the dominant power which builds up the organism and manifests itself in it.

Is it not possible, then, that the principle which obtains in the microcosm has its counterpart in the macrocosm? May not a supreme Will be the ground of all interactions between spiritual substances? May we not say that all centres of experience act and react on each other in uniform ways through an ever-present connecting agency, of which we see a reflexion in the organic world? In suggesting this supreme activity we can at least say that such a mode of action is not purely hypothetical, but is really found within experience. It may be urged that we are here transferring by analogy a principle

which works within experience to the ground of experience as a whole. This is true. But no philosophy can condemn the use of analogy altogether if it is not to sink into scepticism, and the only question is one of justification in the particular case. Moreover, it is not disputed that the primal Will cannot be simply a magnified copy of the will in the physical organism. The represented world in space and time grows out of the interactions of individual substances, and we are here dealing with the ground of that interaction. Hence it is necessary to think of a fundamental Activity which is neither temporal nor spatial. It will be said that activity is inconceivable apart from time: and it may be admitted that our ideally constructed notion of activity seems to imply succession. On the other hand, there must be, as we tried to show, a reality behind the psychologically formed idea, and time, from its very nature, cannot constitute activity but presupposes it. Plainly the fundamental Will must be distinguished from the will which is a mental construction based on personal experience. For it cannot depend for its exercise on an external occasion, nor are we entitled to speak of it as an intermittent agency, now operative and now quiescent. We must not use language which would mean that the centres of experience are scattered over space and require a bridge to establish intercommunica-

tion. One easily drops into the use of such figurative speech, and to some extent it may be unavoidable. Yet when the spatial element is discarded, we are justified in thinking of the fundamental Will as present and operative in all monads without having to overcome an external separation of individuals. The purposive activity of the one ever-present Ground makes possible the conative synthesis by which each centre of experience develops its meaning, and it also is the condition of that systematic connexion of elements in virtue of which an individual can have a function in the whole. Kant spoke of thought through its categories building up the fair fabric of nature out of a chaotic material somehow supplied to it. The conception is unworkable, for thought cannot impose its own laws upon an alien element. Nature could not become an ordered whole for thought if an invisible order did not lie behind it. The individual reals which nature presupposes form, as we believe, a spiritual system of which the active soul is an omnipresent Will. The characterless and unrelated "thing in itself" is a fiction which explains nothing.

An ever-present, eternally operative Will, then, we conclude to be the ground of the external world as experienced. But this determination is largely formal. Whether this Will is the will of

a self-conscious, personal, and ethical being, we do not know as yet. If there be justification for this view, it must be found in the inner or subjective development of experience. And to this aspect of the question we must now turn.

In one sense all experience is subjective. It is *in* a subject: every thing which is individual or real has an inner life, and its qualities are represented in it by its own states. But in the narrower sense that is subjective which not only is for itself but is also conscious of itself. The stages of development toward the latter are tolerably familiar. From the dim self-feeling which reveals itself in the instinctive assimilation of one element and the rejection of another, there is an advance to the level of sensation. When the inner development makes selection and association of sense impressions possible, we have the stage of perception. And when the level of intellection and conceptual thinking is attained, the subject, now fully self-conscious, finds himself confronted by an objective world. From the lowest phase of "conative synthesis" to the most fully developed conceptual thinking, the objective world grows *pari passu* with the subjective: with increasing differentiation between the worlds there goes at the same time increasing connexion. Hence the world of conceptual thought is not to be treated as a secondary and less real

world, which is somehow superimposed on a solid reality. Thinking is experience in its most developed form, and is not the mere excrescence of will, its tool in the endless struggle with fact. Accordingly we may say that the world which takes form as the outcome of intersubjective thinking is the way in which reality reveals itself in us.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, thought and reality are not simply to be identified. For thought, if the highest aspect of experience, is not the whole of it, and develops temporally out of experience which is not conceptual. And experience in its widest sense is a process which is not complete. The growth of mind through intersubjective intercourse shows the never-ceasing endeavour of thought to give more adequate and perfect expression to experience. The fact that the historic evolution of thought is an endeavour, by a constant process of criticism and reconstruction, to give a more perfect state-

<sup>1</sup> Mr F. H. Bradley, laying stress on the negative and distinguishing element in thought to the disadvantage of its positive and connecting aspect, finds it inherently inadequate to reality, and only saves himself from complete scepticism by his doctrine of degrees of reality. No one has more extravagantly depreciated thought than Nietzsche in his latest writings. *Vid.* Orestano, 'Le Idée Fondamentali di F. Nietzsche,' p. 305. "Parmenide ha detto: non si può pensare ciò che non esiste. Nietzsche è pervenuto all'altra estrema: ciò che può venir pensato dev'essere necessariamente una finzione."

One is tempted to add that, if all thought be fiction, Nietzsche's view of thought is itself fiction.

ment of reality is a warning against any thorough-going identification of the one with the other. A connexion in thought will represent a real connexion, if the material premises have been adequately stated as logical premises to begin with.<sup>1</sup> Strict proof, as the establishment of necessary connexion, is between given elements within experience, and does not reach to the ground of all experience.

Hence the well-known attempts to prove the existence of God by logical inference have no proper cogency. To begin with, it is plain that even were the reasoning valid, it would prove very much less than those who used it hoped to do. That which is commonly connoted by the word God contains much more than the so-called theistic proofs can yield in any case. There need be no spiritual content in the idea of an External Designer, a First Cause, or a most Real Being. Again, the Cosmological and Teleological arguments assume that, from one element or aspect of experience, you can pass by a necessity of thought to a reality which is the ground of all experience. Yet here the necessity of thought, supposing that it did exist, could not give as a conclusion a Being who was not finite and limited. In the

<sup>1</sup> "If the essential conditions of error are absent, what is taken for real must be real."—G. F. Stout, in 'Personal Idealism,' p. 35.

Ontological proof, as Kant showed, the assumption common to the different arguments, that necessity of thought gives necessity of fact, is explicitly presented. But the important point is, that the argument becomes absolutely futile for the purpose on hand at the point where it has any semblance of validity. We contradict ourselves if we affirm that being does not exist, and that there is a sum-total of being it is meaningless to deny. But when we go on to qualify this indeterminate Being to fit it for the rôle of Deity, we have no guarantee that the reality must conform to our idea, and to speak of proof is absurd.

The Ontological proof, in its scholastic form, has now become a matter of purely historical interest. It may be well, however, to refer to a suggestive if radical reconstruction of the argument by Pfeiderer. Things, so Pfeiderer puts it, conform to our ideas: the laws of nature are in harmony with the laws of mind. The being of mind is not identical with the being of nature, but the outer and inner worlds are in correspondence. And how is this? The teleological inference is unavoidable; they have been adapted to one another. This adaptation is due to God, the Supreme Reason, who is the ground both of nature and mind. But though we accepted this argument, it would not prove that the common ground of both worlds was

a self-conscious Person:<sup>1</sup> it would require to be supplemented by the argument drawn from the practical reason, as Pfleiderer would admit. But the real difficulty is to suppose that the world of thought and the world of things are divided in the way suggested, so that the former is a kind of duplicate of the latter. If the theory we have already advanced is correct, there is no such separation. Experience is continuous through all its stages, and the laws of thought are only its fullest development. There is no reality which is not experience in some form. But others who cannot accept this view will still find transcendental realism unsatisfactory. And because it makes this assumption, that nature and mind are two diverse worlds which somehow correspond, Pfleiderer's version of the Ontological argument, it seems to me, will not be generally convincing. You divide reality as 'with a hatchet,' and then require a bridge between the severed parts. Of the theistic proofs as a whole, it may be said that it is just in giving proofs that they fail.

At this point it will be best to state the result to which our own course of thought has brought us. We found it necessary to postulate a ground

<sup>1</sup> E. Von Hartmann, who also accepts the principles of transcendental realism, argues, as is well known, from the correspondence of thought and being only to an unconscious World-ground.



for the interaction of spiritual substances. An active Soul or Will seemed the most satisfactory conception of a ground which would make possible the connexion of individual substances without suppressing their individuality. But though we postulate this we cannot turn the postulate into a proof, for we are not able to show that the ground on its part must issue or manifest itself in a world of individual realities. We have now to ask how far the developments of experience through self-conscious subjects will warrant us in giving further determination to the ground postulated.

The cardinal fact in the subjective process of experience is the fact of self-consciousness itself. The whole realm of science, art, and religion has unfolded itself in man because he is an active, self-conscious being. The intellectual and spiritual creations which make up the world in which man lives and moves, are only possible for beings who reflect upon themselves, who both relate themselves to the object and distinguish themselves from it. The importance of the fact of self-consciousness has justified the stress which modern philosophy has laid upon it. Nor should the fact that the consciousness of self has been historically evolved lead us to minimise its significance, or to dethrone it from its central place in human experience. The

unfolding of individuality in its lower forms is mediated, as we saw, by interaction between individuals. And the same law obtains at the stage when individuality assumes a higher and more complex shape. The friction of suitable materials begets the spark. So the contact between selves, the endless give and take between members of a society of which language is the outcome, the sharpening effect of social intercourse upon the mind, have generated the light of self-knowledge. The phrase sometimes used, "the socialised self," at least reminds us how much the human ego depends for its contents on the social system in which it lives and moves. None the less an account of the historical genesis of self-consciousness does not solve the problem of its origin. Social conditions are the means which develop it, but they do not create it.

If we rule the purely materialistic explanation out of court, we may still be told that self-consciousness is the product of unconscious will. The will creates the intelligence as its instrument, the means to its ends. Yet is this really possible? If D an unconscious will becomes S a thinking will, and we exclude the supposition that D is potentially S, then the reason for the development must be sought in the factual experiences by which D is qualified. Let D then interact with A, B, and C:

it will respond to these changes in its environment by becoming  $D \delta$ ,  $D \delta'$ ,  $D \delta''$ . The question is, How can  $\delta$ ,  $\delta'$ ,  $\delta''$ , which represent the reactions of  $D$ , in turn so modify  $D$  that it becomes  $S$ , a self-conscious subject? Stated thus, we can see that the supposition involves a false abstraction. For the states symbolised as  $\delta$ ,  $\delta'$ ,  $\delta''$  have no meaning in themselves but only as expressions of  $D$ . And no repetition or variation of these states could modify  $D$  in any way that was not the utterance of its own character. We can only make intelligible to ourselves the transformation of  $D$  into  $S$  by supposing that it really represents the inner development of  $D$ , of which  $\delta$ ,  $\delta'$ ,  $\delta''$  may be the occasion but cannot be the cause. Stated generally, while self-consciousness can be conceived as the fullest development of an individual substance, it can never be consistently thought as superimposed upon it by conditions acting from without. If unconscious will in the process of experience becomes thinking will, then it must have possessed the character which could be quickened to this high issue. If you deny this, you must take up the untenable position, as it seems to us, that the outcome of development has no necessary relation to its beginning, and then you abandon any principle of explanation, and your assertion ceases to be more than an *ex cathedra* statement. It may

be true, as we see in cases of degeneration, that the Aristotelian principle that what is ὕστερον γένεσθαι is πρότερον φύσει is not always applicable. But in normal development there must be continuity between the germ and the fruit, and we read the meaning of the beginning in the light of the end. In the general evolution of experience sub-conscious preceded self-conscious life, and in the history of the individual person the same order is repeated. And it seems clear that the only way we can put a meaning into sub-conscious mental activity is by regarding it in connexion with its developed result in self-consciousness.

We ought to keep these facts in view when we consider what must be the character of the ultimate Ground which has made possible the development in time of self-conscious beings. For the supreme Will, which conditions the interactions of all individuals, also makes possible the far more complex and highly organised system of intercourse termed social life, the medium out of which self-consciousness emerges in time. To the same immanent activity we must trace that character in the individual real which makes the fullest expression of its nature to be self-consciousness. And the point is whether a ground which is Will and nothing more can be the source of a character which has a development so momentous. The

answer must be the same as that already given. If individual centres of experience were will and nothing more, they could not evolve self-consciousness: and just as little can we suppose that a universal and unconscious Will created by its activity self-conscious subjects. No doubt some have asserted this to be true, but the assertion in this case raises grave practical as well as theoretical difficulties. We live and act on the assumption that the self-conscious world, which is likewise the world of values, is the fullest development of reality. Yet if naked Will is the ground and creator of this world, then an unconscious principle is the source of all value, and is itself the highest value. It is only consistent that those who hold this speculative theory should treat the kingdom of self-conscious spirits as a lapse from the unconscious, and advocate a revaluation in the interests of pessimism. The radical contradiction between this *Weltanschauung* and our most deep-rooted personal instincts is a strong argument against it.

No doubt, although the fundamental Will be self-conscious, it is not possible for us to define the way in which it is the active ground of self-consciousness in individual centres of experience.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When Leibniz, for example ('*Monadologie*,' 47), speaks of his monads as "des fulgurations continuelles de la divinité," the language can only be taken as metaphorical.

On the other hand, if our regressive movement only brings us to an unconscious ground of experience, the ground is plainly insufficient, for it cannot impart that which is alien to itself. The nature of developed experiences therefore justifies the postulate, that the Will, which is the ground of all centres of experience, is the Will of a conscious Self.

At this point I will notice an objection that may be directed against the argument. We shall be told, perhaps, that if the World-Ground is self-conscious, it may be conceived as purely immanent without being open to the objections previously urged against a purely immanent Ground. The difficulties we raised before, it will be contended, were plausible just owing to the fact that we were taking experience at too low a level. Follow it out to its fullest expression in self-consciousness, and you will find you have a principle which duly differentiates subject and object, universal and particular, and still contains them in an inclusive unity. We can only say again that the generalised experience which gives us an objective world is only intelligible on the assumption that it presupposes reals which are not adjectives. To put it generally, all experience does not fall within the self-conscious subject. It may be said that this is true of the finite self-consciousness, but it does not

hold of the Absolute, which, while giving full scope to differences, maintains itself in them. If this be so, then, as the individual self-consciousness falls within the whole of reality, the Absolute self must contain all such selves within itself. Can the Universal Self and individual selves be so related and continue to possess what is claimed for them? In other words, can the Absolute Self and the finite self, so conceived, be each for itself as well as for the other? It is easy to speak vaguely of a Universal Self which is the unity of all particular selves, but those who use this language are not always careful to explain exactly what they mean. I believe those who adopt this standpoint must be driven in the end to accept one of two alternatives: either the Universal Self alone is real and finite selves are an illusion, or the finite selves only are real and the Universal Self is a fiction. For if the Absolute Self *S* exists in the individual selves *a*, *b*, *c*, it must be in each of them. Yet it cannot be in *a*, or *b*, or *c*, taken in isolation, but only as entering into the whole, or it would not unify them. The fact that *a*, *b*, and *c* are for *S*, which is a supreme and inclusive self, because it unites all finite selves in a totality outside of which it does not itself exist, forbids us to suppose that the claim of *a*, *b*, and *c* to be for themselves over against *S*, is anything but an illusion. For in the

very assertion of themselves they refuse to merge wholly in S. I cannot see that under these conditions  $\alpha$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$  could be anything more than the states of consciousness in which the Supreme Subject expresses its activity.<sup>1</sup> Again, if you persist under these conditions in maintaining the personality of individuals, the unreality of the Absolute Self becomes just as inevitable. This is well brought out in a very clear and candid discussion by Mr J. E. M'Taggart.<sup>2</sup> He holds that personal selves are the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, and fall of course entirely within its unity. The Absolute is *in* each individual self, but also outside it, and therefore is *for* it. But we cannot say that individual selves are also *for* the Absolute, since there is nothing outside the Absolute. Hence Mr M'Taggart comes to the conclusion that the Absolute cannot be a person (unless in some utterly incomprehensible way). It is really a system of selves, a society of eternally existing spirits. This bold discussion of the problem will probably do good, because it sets forth in a vivid light the inherent difficulties of the view that an

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that Paulsen, in his endeavour to round off his pluralism in a monism, uses this notion. We may conceive, he tells us, the relation of the Absolute to individual spirits after the analogy of the thinking subject to its states ('*Einleitung in die Philosophie*,' p. 250).

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in the Hegelian Cosmology*, chap. iii.



Absolute Self is the immanent unity of all finite selves. But the objections to Mr M'Taggart's own theory are, to say the least, very serious. If, as he seems to say, the only reality is the fundamental differentiations of the Absolute, self-conscious subjects, what are those centres of experience which are not self-conscious? How are we to interpret nature? Fundamental differentiations of the Absolute can neither begin nor pass away. Has every person, then, existed from all eternity? The Absolute, it must be supposed, is perfect; yet how can this be reconciled with the fact that error, weakness, and sin attach to its constituent differentiations? That kind of apotheosis of the individual spirit which Mr M'Taggart's theory seems to imply has no warrant in facts. And it is in conflict with an essential aspect of religious experience. We conclude on the general question that the idea of a Supreme Self-consciousness, which is the purely immanent unity of all individual selves, is inconsistent with what is involved in the nature of the self.

But there is one other theory which I should like to consider in this connexion before going further. It is that of Lotze. He holds, as we know, that the Absolute is the one real Being, but he also tries to show that it is personal, or something more and better than personal. No competent thinker will

suppose that the divine Personality is nothing more than a magnified copy of the human. There are limitations involved in the latter which cannot be transferred to the former; and popular religion very commonly forgets this. On any view, however, that is not personal which cannot use the pronoun 'I,' which is not self-conscious. If, then, it can be shown that the Absolute is self-conscious, we are justified in calling it personal. Now, a constant feature of self-consciousness, as we know it, is the contrast of ego and non-ego. I affirm myself and know myself as over against a not-self. Lotze's problem, therefore, is to show how the Absolute, which is the supreme and sole reality, can be a self-conscious Being. His argument, put briefly, runs thus.<sup>1</sup> Self-consciousness is not developed by forming an image, which is identified as an image of the ego. For this operation presupposes an already existing self-feeling. In this feeling lies the principle which differentiates one self from another. The self is not gradually defined over against an outward reality but by contrast with its own inward and changing states. No doubt in the case of finite persons there is an ultimate reference to something without implied in sensation: but Lotze urges that this is not an

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 39 ff., and *Microcosmus* (Eng. trans.), vol. ii. 680 ff.

essential feature of personality, but a defect which attaches to its finite form. In an infinite personality no such external reference is necessary.

This ingenious argument has been accepted by several thinkers, and it is undoubtedly suggestive. At the same time, supposing it to be valid, I think it still leaves the old difficulty unexplained how there can be individual personalities *within* the one real personal Being. And it is at least doubtful if any distinction between a self and its inner states does not ultimately involve a reference to a not-self or other. It must indeed be granted that an original self-feeling is presupposed in forming the distinction of ego and non-ego, as well as in the process by which the ego is able to recognise *itself* as an identity which maintains itself through its own states. Yet all our experience goes to show that the feeling only becomes an explicit consciousness, because we find it practically necessary to mark off gradually a section of our ideas as representative of the not-self. And on this contrast appears to depend the generalisation by which we designate a part of our experience as inner. The interior world of human memory and reflection, in which we are invited to see a faint adumbration of the closed inner life of the Absolute, is a highly complex construction which could not be developed apart from the not-self. Is there any proof that

this reference to another than the self, which is implied in our developed self-consciousness, is a feature which is restricted to the finite? If there is, Lotze does not supply it. And it remains a puzzle how the Absolute could refer its states to itself, if there were nothing with which it could contrast itself. If an Absolute Self-consciousness were possible under these conditions,—and on this we will not dogmatise,—the analogy between it and our own self-consciousness must be very slender indeed.

While the necessary reference to the not-self in finite self-consciousness is not, I think, in itself a defect, yet there can be no doubt that, in the particular form in which it manifests itself in our experience, it does carry with it a limitation. As Lotze says, we do not contain within ourselves the conditions of our own existence, and external stimuli come to us from an object which does not depend upon us. The work of ideal construction by which we interpret experience we are compelled to envisage in forms of space and time, and cognition is a process which goes from part to part, and is never complete and adequate to its object. Memory, the instrument by which we link the present to the past, is only fragmentary in its achievement, and severely restricts the contents of individual knowledge. Hence to some extent the

wide fields of experience always appear to the individual knower a foreign territory, which shuts in his own slender property. Again, the act of will, by which we seek to modify reality in accordance with our idea, is the expression of a desire in us. And this desire is born of an incomplete harmony of inner and outer, and is a demand for fuller correspondence between the self and its object. But the process of will in time never gives the completeness which is its ideal, and endeavour never closes in a full satisfaction. Nor is it otherwise when a man makes himself his object, and reflects upon his own life. If self-knowledge is desirable, it is proverbially difficult. We do not succeed in gathering up into a whole, and illuminating with a clear light, the inner history. Here and there spaces of our life remain brightly lighted, but greater interspaces have faded into darkness and are forgotten; and these have been important elements in making us what we are. And phases of our inner experience which we do remember, with the lapse of years we sometimes find ourselves unable fully to understand and appreciate. Indeed many considerations go to show that man is not a complete self-consciousness, he is not a perfect personality. For this can only be said of a subject for whom the object contains no alien element, and is fully comprehended; where will is activity which

is no token of defect; and where the self in all its meaning is ever present to consciousness, and the whole is a full harmony.

After these criticisms and discussions we come to the important question whether, and if so, how far, we can offer any theory of the nature of God as personal, which would serve to justify the use of the term in this reference. There are some, who have the interests of religion at heart, who hold that any speculative construction of the nature of God is valueless. The theologian, R. A. Lipsius, for instance, has declared that God is personal in the faith relation, but we cannot translate what is real to faith into an independent metaphysical determination.<sup>1</sup> If we take this to mean that we cannot give an adequate speculative construction of the divine nature, the statement need not be disputed. But if we take it to mean that the personality of God is a pure matter of faith, which reason is powerless to justify, then the case is surely put too strongly. If reason were entirely dumb on the subject, the verdict of faith, standing quite unsupported, would be felt in the long-run to be unsatisfactory. A Philosophy of Religion, though it does not pretend to give a full solution of this question, may properly be expected to show reason for one

<sup>1</sup> Dogmatik, 1879, pp. 175, 176. Cp. also the remarks a little further on in this essay.

view or the other. And if it argues that God is personal, it should try to show that this determination is so far consistent with the ground of experience.

The result which our discussion up to this point seems to have yielded may be stated thus. If God, conceived as Absolute, be the whole of reality, one of two results follows. Either individual selves are real, but God the system in which they are connected is not a person; or the Absolute as the sum of experience is a self, but the selves which fall within it are mere appearance. Neither view is satisfactory. In the one case we cannot understand how self-conscious persons should issue out of the unconscious world-process, in the other we virtually explain them away. If, then, we are to maintain the reality both of the divine and the human self, we cannot speak of God as the Absolute in the common philosophic use of the term. For if God be the all-inclusive whole of reality, a personal relation between Him and individuals is not possible, and there is no real place for religion. If we do use the term Absolute of God, it must be in a more restricted sense. We may speak of God as the absolute ground or condition of experience, not as the all-inclusive whole of experience. It will be a gain if recent discussions have made it clear that the philosophic Absolute and the religious idea of

God cannot, as they stand, be made to coincide. If the notion of the Absolute is right, our view of religion cannot hold good: if the claim of religion is valid, the idea of the Absolute must be revised.<sup>1</sup>

The World-Ground, we already concluded, must be self-conscious, and we now add that, though all finite experience depends on it, it is not the whole of experience. The question will perhaps be put to us, How is it possible to think of a Supreme Self who is the ground of all human selves, while both are for themselves as well as for one another? Plainly our view involves the inference that the activity of the divine Will by which He is ground of all human experience is not a stage or step by which He becomes self-conscious. For this takes us back to the unworkable notion of a purely immanent divine consciousness. Hence the Supreme Being must contain eternally *within* Himself the actualised conditions of self-consciousness. These conditions, we found reason to believe, were that

<sup>1</sup> Philosophy and Religion frequently agree in regarding God as the Supreme Spirit. But when a distinguished exponent of the all-inclusive notion of the Absolute, like Prof. Jones, tells us ('Hibbert Journal,' Oct. 1903, p. 31) that reality is a coherent system all of whose parts and elements exist in and through a supreme principle which manifests and embodies itself in them, and adds that religion as well as philosophy calls this principle God, we must take leave to doubt the statement. The weight of historic evidence is that the religious mind means by God a reality which differs in essential points from such a principle.



there should be a not-self contrasted with and yet related to the self. This appears to be a feature in all gradations in the development of self in finite experience. No doubt in the region of our experience we never find a perfect harmony and correspondence between the self and its object, as the existence of evil and error testify: and the historic process seems to be an endeavour towards fuller concord. The Divine Being, it may be suggested, is the eternally perfect and complete type, of which human self-consciousness is the partial and imperfect reflexion. This would mean that God is not to be conceived as pure unity. The element of difference must enter into His nature, but here it does not carry with it external limitation or defect of any kind. Rather we must think of a unity which is differentiated but is at the same time a perfect harmony; of a not-self which in no way impedes the activity of the self, and of a subject which fully realises itself in the object; of a Being, in short, in whom subject and object completely and harmoniously interpenetrate. It is important to remember here that the Divine Nature is not under the conditions of time and space, and that the defects which pertain to perceptual and cognitive process in our experience do not exist in it. The piecemeal character which attaches to our thought and will cannot belong to the divine thought and

will. And the fact that we are under these limitations debars us from comprehending adequately the Supreme Consciousness in our discursive thought.

The same difficulty besets us when we try to understand the divine world-grounding activity. We can hardly avoid using words which contain spatial and temporal images, and yet these must be more or less misleading. The phrase 'act of will,' for instance, suggests a passing into activity due to some occasion at a particular point of time. And an idea like this applied to God is full of difficulties and contradictions. It is perhaps less open to objection to say that God's will is eternally ground of all individual experience, in the sense that we cannot consistently represent to ourselves His bringing it into being at any particular point in time. On the other hand, we do not know enough of the divine nature to warrant us in saying that the manifestation of the Divine Will, as ground of a connected world of individual selves, is necessarily involved in that nature. The divine self-consciousness is not made possible by the existence of a world in space and time. Nevertheless if we say that God might equally have manifested, or refrained from manifesting, His Will in a world of individual spirits, this would mean that self-revelation is not essential to His nature. And the notion that the

present world has been preferentially chosen by God, out of various possible worlds, implies an anthropomorphic conception of Deity which it is hard to justify: both from a metaphysical and ethical point of view it is open to serious objections. Nor can we give any satisfying explanation *how* spiritual substances come to exist *for* themselves, while they form a coherent whole only through the immanent connecting activity of the Divine Will. Explanation is the fruit of the endeavour to find and state in general terms the continuity which exists between elements within experience, and it always carries with it the impress of its origin. Indeed the explanation how anything takes place, if sufficient for the purpose in hand, is never theoretically complete. So we cannot be expected to establish the exact connexion between centres of experience and their ultimate ground, for the connexion would have to be stated in a form of thought properly applicable to elements which fall within our experience. But though we cannot explain how spiritual Beings proceed from the Divine Will, this does not invalidate the postulate, if it can be justified on other grounds.

According to the view here suggested, God is the actual and perfect form of personality, and, as timeless ground of the world, He is the condition of the development of personal experience in time. We

cannot conceive Him as an individual spirit in a society, for then His meaning must be found in the system of which He was a member, and He would be conditioned as well as conditioning. And He would thus share the limitations of finite spirits, and could not contain in Himself the reason of His activity. God must ever be differentiated from finite persons, in that He is the active ground on which they all depend. He is the supreme Self-consciousness who transcends the divisions of space and time, and makes possible that partial reflexion of Himself which is the developing self-consciousness of man.

The foregoing argument has led us by successive stages to the determination of the World-Ground as Supreme Will, as Self-conscious Will, and finally as the Will of a complete or perfect Personality. We must now ask how far the nature of personal experience warrants us in giving more definite content to the idea of God. The speculative thinker cannot follow in the track of the older theologians and, selecting certain ethical predicates, simply declare that they must belong in perfection (*via eminentiæ*) to the divine character. It has been said that all such analogical attribution of content is here invalid.<sup>1</sup> The statement is too sweeping. But no doubt we cannot postulate ethical qualifications of

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, by Wundt. *Vid.* *System der Philosophie*, p. 438.

the Divine Nature in the way that we postulate a personal ground of the world. Obviously many qualities we judge good in men cease to have a meaning in an eternal and perfect Being. And if the mere fact that certain virtues have come to exist in men be a pledge that they have a counterpart in God, we ought to say the same of human vices. The truth is that experience, viewed as *existing fact*, gives no valid ground for inferring that God is a spiritual personality, such as He appears to the developed religious consciousness. Pure thought can never show us that ethical content must be predicated of the Deity: speculative thinkers who ostensibly deduce such content really assume it. If we are to justify ourselves in giving this further qualification to the idea of God, it must be on other grounds than those which are purely intellectual. The claim so to interpret the character of God must rest on the demand of our inner nature, that the Being who is the ground of all reality satisfy our moral and spiritual needs and aspirations. Is the claim a valid one?

If the demand in question were simply a subjective desire that ultimate Reality should be qualified in particular ways, it would be hard to defend its validity; and we are not in the habit of assuming that what we wish to be must be. The case would be different if it should appear that the claim is the

normal outcome of the practical life of men. Now in the forefront of the practical life the distinction has been set between what *is* and what *ought* to be. Man in the exercise of his will ever places a better before him, and moves in a world of values. A being "of large discourse," he looks before and after; and with the possible satisfaction of the moment he contrasts a greater good, which may be inconsistent with it and should be preferred before it. By allegiance to some central end or chief good, to which other values are related as a means, he seeks more or less consciously to organise his conduct as a consistent whole. The affirmation that something ought to be, the demand that value should be realised, this has been the constant witness of the human spirit throughout its history. The content of the idea of value has changed with the changing life of societies, but the historic process has been, on the whole, from material to ethical and spiritual conceptions of good. No doubt man, speaking at a particular point and time in the evolution of experience, cannot give final and determinate content to the idea of what ought to be. He sees 'as through a glass darkly,' but he has faith that the good dimly discerned is no abstraction and works as a living influence on human souls. In his endeavour to fill his personal life with a good which he has not yet, man finds a meaning for his

existence and a scope for his freedom. Not the world of mere fact but that which ought to be has the best title to exist. So humanity, clinging in faith to the thought of a good which transcends all other goods, moves forward to its goal by the way of the better. Faith, it must be said, will not accept the view that its ideal good is a purely relative notion which, Proteus-like, takes many forms, and is only consistent in refusing to be fixed to any one of them. Nor can it agree that a Supreme Value is a mere abstraction, although when pressed for a reason it cannot point and say, Lo here, or lo there ! The kingdom of faith is within, and its members are convinced that they experience the presence and appeal of the good which ought to be. This faith is the utterance of the free spirit, and is its personal affirmation that that is real which is demanded by its own deepest needs. The judgment of faith is certainly not a logical inference which follows analytically from premises which are given ; yet it would not be fair to say that it is only a psychological statement of what occurs in a particular person. The judgment which faith makes is not an isolated one. It is rather the normal utterance of the spiritual nature, the affirmation of what men recognise to be the demand of their moral and spiritual life. Directly or indirectly you must attest its practical validity. The Buddhist, for

example, while radically differing in his valuations from Western races, is still impelled to assert the claim of a higher good to be: Nirvana is what ought to be, and it is better than any existence in sense and time. We conclude that it is a normal characteristic of man as an active spiritual being to assert over against mere fact the claim of a higher good; and this involves the faith that all values stand in organic relation to a Supreme value. The existence of a highest value, though not a logical inference, might be named with Kant a postulate of the practical reason, for it is a demand which grows out of the organisation of practical life.

That in the historical development of the race the step of personifying the highest value should have been taken is significant. It is intelligible, too, for goodness has always a personal reference, and in the last resort is something personally realised. Hence the value-judgment finds its goal in a God who is perfectly good, the source of all the value that is, and the pledge of its completion. We do not underrate this movement as a historical testimony to man's need of God. At the same time, if the ground of our theistic belief is only a judgment of value, I cannot but think the foundation is not sufficiently stable. Let me state shortly some objections to the view, held by not a few at present, which throws



the whole stress of the theistic inference on the value-judgment.

Although in practical life we must affirm our faith in value, and even in a highest value, the need of finding this value personified in a Supreme Being has not been universally experienced. There are always some in every age who do not feel that their inward needs call for the existence of a God. Nor does it seem inconsistent with our faith in value, that the highest good should be, not a single Supreme Person but a celestial oligarchy, or even a society of souls who find a perfect satisfaction in one another. Such a conception may be contradictory, but from the value standpoint it need not be so; and if we reject it, it must be for other reasons. Again, it is decidedly unsatisfactory that on grounds of faith alone we should predicate a highly developed notion like personality of the supreme good: at the very least we ought to discuss how far it is applicable in such a case. If it were argued that personality is a form of the finite only, it would not be enough for the theologian to say, "Faith assures us that the Infinite is personal, and therefore it must be so in fact." He would require to show that the concept of the Infinite, or the World-Ground, was at least not inconsistent with personality. We have, however, already touched on the point, and will only add here that a theism which rests entirely on a

reading of the value-judgment must be perilously weak.

We have tried to show that there are other grounds why God should be conceived as personal. And if the conclusion be accepted, then the service the value-judgment can render in this connexion becomes clear. Faith completes the more formal determinations of reason, and the practical postulate of a highest good gives content to our conception of the self-conscious ground of things. The Supreme-value which faith affirms to be real must belong to the inner nature of the Supreme Self. In the Divine Consciousness the highest good eternally has that reality which the finite self, from its standpoint in time, affirms it ought to have. Hence to the eye of faith the process of experience is neither a mechanical movement nor a dialectic evolution but stages in the development of the good which is the content of the Divine Will. From this point of view the demands of the ethical consciousness represent the inner meaning of the historic process, and witness to the character of its ground. But it must be confessed that we cannot give adequate specification to the highest value conceived as the world-end. Man must be content to gather glimpses of his goal with the progressive development of the good in the growing riches of personal life. The spirit of

the age, "dreaming of things to come," can never give a clear form and body to the ideal it aspires after, and the prophets who would describe it speak in doubtful oracles. When we turn the eye from the illuminated space called the present, the forms of distant things are dim. Man, however, sees enough for the conduct of life when he can advance on the line of the goal, and pass from the lesser to the greater good. Moreover, the highest good, as it would be for our thought, would still fall far short of that living fulness of personal experience in which alone it could be adequately known and appreciated. The experience we have to go on is incomplete. For aught that we know, terrestrial experience may be only a fragmentary portion of a vaster experience. So the faith which speaks confidently of a final good is also constrained to confess that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But it is at least clear that the ultimate good must be a personally realised experience, and it cannot be apart from God, who is the source and consummation of all goodness. Let me add that, as it is by an act of faith we affirm the reality of the Absolute Value, so it is likewise an act of faith by which we affirm that it coincides with the Self-Conscious ground of all experience. Not reason, then, but faith gives ethical content to the idea of God. Nevertheless

there is a justification for the conviction that the theoretical and the value-judgment must converge towards, and find their goal in, one Supreme Being. For though we cannot unify the two in thought, yet both proceed from one and the same personal life in man, which cannot finally be divided against itself. And this life everywhere has its roots in the activity of the personal World-Ground.

We now turn to the concluding part of our task in the present essay. We proceed to consider the final interpretation of religion in the light of its ultimate basis. The discussion in an earlier essay was concerned with the psychological interpretation of religious development; it remains for us to try to complete this statement by re-considering our results from the speculative standpoint, which we have sought to make good in the foregoing pages.

The objective basis of religion is God, and more definitely God as the supreme and perfect Spiritual Personality. All experience has its ground in the Divine Will; but it is only with the development of personal centres of experience that the divine activity within experience can be the ground for conscious acts which have a religious significance. Very important is it in the interpretation of religion to remember that the Divine Being, while immanent

in all centres of experience, also transcends them, and does not derive the fulness of His personal life from them. For religion, it cannot be disguised, means a personal relationship, and the object of reverence must at least be invested with some personal qualities. Within a strictly pantheistic whole there is scope neither for judgments of value nor for religious faith. On the other hand, if we so differentiate the divine and the human that the immanence of the divine in the human is lost sight of, the facts of the religious consciousness again become inexplicable. The universal character of religion shows that it is a native expression of the human soul, and its root must lie in that immanent activity of God by which He is the ground of personal and self-conscious beings. This seems to us the ontological explanation of the psychological fact that religion is the expression of certain common elements in the personal life of men. With a merely external relation of God to man, religion likewise becomes external, and ceases to be a vital utterance of human needs and energies. The old words which speak of the divine as the "life and light of men" find ample justification in the witness of the religious consciousness.

The psychological study of religious development has shown us that religion is the utterance of man's

nature as a whole, yet certain feelings are specially active in promoting it. I refer to the feeling of incompleteness and need, to the sense of dependence. From the first this attitude of spirit had a practical justification in the circumstances of the human lot on earth. The Philosophy of Religion gives a deeper and a broader basis to the psychological facts. The feeling of need and dependence ultimately springs from the nature of human personality. The finite spirit has not the ground of its being in itself but in God, who makes possible its activity. Historically it was the physical facts of his limitation which first pressed themselves on primitive man, but the process of inner development led to the recognition that incompleteness is a note of the personal life itself. All individual being is derivative, it has its ground in the Divine Will; and this fundamental fact lies behind that experience of incompleteness and dependence which marks the religious consciousness. The growth in the religious consciousness has been in the direction of converting this material and external idea of dependence into an inward and spiritual idea, or, what is the same thing, the desire for freedom has passed from a negative to a positive form. That primitive piety which is concerned with the deliverance from brute wants and fears is slowly transmuted into the spiritual mind, which yearns

for the inward completion of its own life through the indwelling life of God. And the process by which man rises to this lofty thought is the process by which he comes to the consciousness of the immanent ground of his own being.

But it is necessary to the right interpretation of religion to keep in view the special character of the Divine Ground on which personal life depends. We must remember that the Divine Being who stands in intimate relation to the lives of men is a perfect and complete Personality. The defects which are involved in human knowledge and volition have no counterpart in God, who is eternally in harmony with Himself. And it is the immanent working of the divine in the human, the contact and pressure of the larger Self, which gives the impulse to development and is the living source of religious aspiration. It is because our life is grounded in a perfect Being that we strive after a perfect satisfaction of the self, and can finally be content with no temporal good. The history of religion is the record how man transcends each partial satisfaction of his spiritual nature, and seeks a satisfaction final and complete; and the explanation of the process is the inner relation of the soul to God.

The significance of religion, however, will not be grasped if we do not recognise a special character in

the imperfection which attaches to human personality. This is not simply that of an undeveloped being, who has not yet realised the latent richness of his nature. If this were all, then the sense of discord and division in the self, which in the developed religious consciousness utters itself in the longing for redemption and spiritual deliverance, would not be intelligible. The truth is that, over and above what may be called natural imperfection, there is that particular quality of evil in the human self which we designate sin. Sin is a contradiction of the divine law of man's nature, and is made possible by the fact that the human self is so differentiated from its divine ground that it calls its will its own and can oppose the Divine Will. There is an irrational element in sin, and it is not fully explicable; but it is a fact which the Philosophy of Religion cannot ignore, though it is not able to offer a speculative theory of its origin and meaning. Any attempt to rationalise moral evil, by showing that it is somehow involved in the evolution of the good as its necessary contrast, can only be partially successful. For in the last resort we are confronted with the verdict of the moral consciousness that sin is just what *ought not* to be. And one must distrust the power of the most synoptic mind to rise to a standpoint, where that which the moral judgment says ought not to be is



seen as possessing a proper title to exist.<sup>1</sup> The fact of sin, however you interpret it, gives emphasis to the reality of human freedom,—a point of great importance to the right understanding of religion. For apart from this freedom the discord which is in our nature is not intelligible—a discord which makes the burden of the higher Ethical Religions a longing for inward reconciliation. And then the act of faith by which the individual finds deliverance in communion with a Divine Being is also an exercise of freedom: you cannot construe it as the necessary outcome of inward development. If you eliminate this element of personal freedom, I do not see how a man's religion should be to him an inward and personal expression of himself. It could not be so any more than the language he habitually

<sup>1</sup> In a system like Hegel's sin must somehow find a place in the dialectical evolution of spirit. Mr M'Taggart, in his 'Studies in the Hegelian Cosmology,' chap. vi., advances some considerations in favour of the view that it is the negative moment in the transition from innocence to virtue. But his remarks are not convincing. Say what you will, when sin becomes a necessary stage in personal development, it ceases to be sin in the full sense of the word. In individual experience it is not necessary to participate in sin in order that there be that reaction against it which promotes the formation of disciplined virtue. Moreover it does not seem correct to say that virtue reached after personal experience of sin is thereby more complete. It would be nearer the mark to affirm that, though a man's conscious antagonism to sin may be sharpened by experience of the misery it entails, yet his bygone indulgence in evil habit leaves an element of weakness in his character which may reveal itself in time of stress.

speaks is the expression of his character and individuality.<sup>1</sup>

Behind this exercise of freedom on man's part, and never destroyed by it, is the fundamental relation in which he stands to God, the perfect Personality. On this depends the fact that in the use of his freedom he has brought discord into his nature. For discord takes us back to a harmony of which it is a disturbance, and just because the harmony strives to assert itself are there division and pain. That discontent with itself which impels the soul to look above itself, if a token of imperfection, is also a witness to the enduring bond which links it to a harmonious and perfect Life. The development of religion in the individual and the race is an endeavour to gain a harmonious personal existence, and the common need and demand for this arise out of the immanent relation of the human self to a Divine Self. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The pressure of the Divine ideal from within is man's warrant and encouragement to embark on this high enterprise. Nor is it alien work at which he is invited to labour: he is only bidden strive to enter into the

<sup>1</sup> These remarks no doubt apply chiefly to the higher religions. At the stage of nature-religion personal freedom is undeveloped. To the savage freedom means no more than deliverance from the oppression of physical evils.

full enjoyment of that heritage which is his spiritual birthright.

But religion, as an endeavour after personal harmony, though in its development it presents features of its own, is of course subject to the general conditions of human development. Even on the lower levels of individual being, the nature of the individual is only unfolded through interaction with other individuals. And at a higher stage we have recognised that self-consciousness is mediated by the interplay of mind with mind in a social system. Nor is it otherwise with the development of the personal capacity for religion. The growth in self-consciousness which society makes possible is also accompanied by a growth in the religious consciousness: and at all its stages religion reflects the character of the society to which it belongs. When, for instance, the social medium becomes rich enough to nourish a highly developed personality, then this is reflected in the *inner* religion of the prophet and spiritual teacher. And, as it is a general law that self-consciousness unfolds by interaction with other selves, the same is true in the case of the spiritual consciousness. The latter finds expression and wins strength for progress in the mutual affections, duties, and services of persons within a social whole. In and through their relations to others men give practical form to their religious faith. At whatever

level you take religion, you always see that it contains the idea of a bond linking men to their God and to one another. The idea may be crude and external, or it may be refined and spiritual, yet it is ever present. A religion for the single soul and for no other is instinctively felt to be a contradiction. Plainly this feature is not arbitrary or accidental, but belongs to the nature of religion itself; and it seems possible to suggest a speculative interpretation of it. It must have its basis in the fundamental character of the divine activity—that activity by which individuals are placed in a position of common dependence, while at the same time they are made interdependent. God is the immanent Ground of each personal life, and connects all personal centres of experience. It is the harmony of the divine Self in inner contact with the human self which urges man to seek satisfaction in religion. Hence the religious impulse, proceeding from a common source and tending to the like expression, was felt as a bond of union in tribe or people: and this bond had its visible form in the God of their worship. Under existing psychological and social conditions man has given what utterance he could to the truth, that what is central in each man is common to all, and that the religious bond is rooted in the inner nature of men. He has had to use the symbols which lay to his hand in his

endeavour to express the tie which bound him and his fellows to divine powers. He conceives the bond to be one of blood, or he thinks of it less crudely as a kinship which goes back to a common divine ancestor; or, finally, he regards it as the spiritual brotherhood which proceeds from the one spiritual Father in heaven. But though they may have expressed the principle inadequately in symbol or in creed, men have always believed, and acted on the belief, that the tie which bound them to their God also bound them intimately to one another. The persistence of this feature shows that it belongs to the essence of religion. We suggest that its ultimate explanation lies in the fact that God, the source of the religious consciousness, is the ground on which all spirits depend, and by which they are linked to one another. And the religious consciousness in its temporal development gives expression to the nature of the Power which works in its working.

The thinker who tries to read a philosophic meaning into the history of religious development has a hard task, for the facts are often stubborn and refractory. But any attempt to deal with the problem must keep, as it seems to us, two things in view. These are (1) the common Divine Ground from which the religious consciousness proceeds, and (2) the temporal conditions and limita-

tions under which that consciousness can reveal itself. By the former we explain the universality of religion and the continuity of its manifestation through all the stages of human culture. And by the second we must explain the diverse and often conflicting utterances of that consciousness in its temporal unfolding. The changing social medium reflects the spiritual light in manifold ways. But when we take into account the difference in the character of the medium, the phenomena need not be inconsistent with unity of source. For the self is socially evolved, and the god in whom the self seeks satisfaction corresponds to the self which has to be satisfied. But it is just the presence of the Divine in man throughout the long evolution of personal life which makes him realise the partial nature of the satisfaction he has attained. It impels him to pass beyond the one-sided forms in which he has given expression to his faith, and urges him to seek a satisfaction deeper and more complete. This is the principle which lies behind the rise and fall of religions in history. And the fact that the religious spirit is in movement, that it transcends the incomplete and, as it may seem, conflicting forms in which it embodies itself, should make us willing to admit that there may be unity of meaning and purpose in a process which we can only survey in part.

But we must also remember that the divine immanence does not work so as to submerge the individual personality and supersede its freedom. The form which the religious consciousness takes is not wrought in man independently of his own will. An act of choice and personal appropriation are implied. And it is possible for him to give it an expression which neither corresponds to his deeper nature nor ministers directly to progress. Fetishism and, at a higher stage, pantheism are such forms; for neither lends itself to that inner personal development which is essential to religious progress. Still, though such phases of religion stand for a retrograde movement, they may have a function in religious development, if only a negative one. Their incapacity to satisfy the need of the personal life may promote a reaction of the religious spirit towards a fruitful line of advance. The spiritual nature, in sympathetic response to its divine ground, asserts itself against the claims of a one-sided development.

That there is on the whole a progress in religious history we have already concluded. But standing as we do in the midst of this great movement, we can hardly expect to perceive its full and final significance. Nevertheless the prospect is not wholly dark. The movement has its ground in the working of a supreme and perfect Personality.

Finite personality has its preliminary basis in individuality, and develops out of it. Individual centres of experience lie behind the ideally constructed world. The individual real becomes the self-conscious individual, and the self-conscious individual in interaction with others acquires continuity of interest and determinate character. He becomes personal in the larger sense. So experience comes to ripe blossom and fruit in personality. And if experience has its highest issue in personal life, it is in religion that personal life gains its fullest development. The evolution of religion itself is a deepening and enrichment of self-consciousness. In this process in time, as we venture to interpret it, the Divine Spirit, working through human aspiration and endeavour, seeks to bring human souls to their amplest self-fulfilment in living harmony and fellowship with Himself.

The general trend of religious evolution we have already described as a movement from the sensuous to the spiritual. And in the course of this history personality plays an increasingly important part. This fact has perhaps been sufficiently brought out in an earlier essay. There are two special points, however, connected with the development of this conception which have an interest for the Philosophy of Religion. The first of these is the force and definiteness given to the personal idea



through the life and work of the great spiritual teachers and founders of religion. They impressed on men the truth that religion was a personal attitude, a matter of faith and conduct: and they on their part seemed to men to set before them a true knowledge of what God was and man ought to be. They revealed God to human faith; in their words and works they gave forth the divine spirit which filled them. And to the pious imagination of later generations they became ideal figures who represented the perfection of a religious personality. They gave concrete shape to the ideal, they brought the divine near to men, and they stood forth on the historic stage the spiritual helpers of those who struggled towards the heavenly goal. The Philosophy of Religion cannot *prove* that these personalities have been the special organs of higher revelation to humanity, though their influence on religious development has been very great. But, as we have argued before, they are not fully explained by their age and circumstances. And while there is a sense in which all religion has its root in the divine, there is no valid reason for denying that the Supreme Spirit may be more directly operative at one point than another. Indeed if we are clear, as we ought to be, that the World-Ground is not mere substance but an active personal Spirit, we shall regard such action as prob-

able. The verdict of historical criticism in any given case is of value, but in the region of spiritual causality it cannot give a final decision. Where faith finds a quickening and renewing influence flowing from a personality, the way is open to recognise there a revelation from a divine source.

There are two aspects of the divine nature, as our speculative discussion showed, the immanent and transcendent. And our second point is, that in the higher development of religion the transcendent aspect comes to clear consciousness. The statement may be controverted. It will be said that an immanent God is the only one which the modern mind can entertain. There is a tendency in recent thought to lay stress on the immanence of God to the exclusion of His transcendence. But it seems to me the tendency is speculative in its motive rather than religious. The religious consciousness has always recognised a presence of God in the world, but as the spiritual mind developed it came to realise the complementary side of the divine nature. And this has been the fruit of the growing perception in spiritual experience of the demands of personality. The higher religious consciousness finds that the things of sense and time cannot satisfy it. Likewise it sees that the most potent obstacles to its development are within, the selfish desires and evil passions. And the soul

which can gain the harmony it craves neither without nor within is urged towards a power above it. Hence the part redemption plays in the higher ethical religions. And the God who redeems is always thought to be elevated above the evils and defects of temporal existence, and so able to impart that spiritual harmony to the soul which the world cannot give. This negative relation to the world has indeed sometimes been emphasised overmuch. The way to God has been conceived, as Plato at one time conceived it, to be a retreat from the things of sense, *φύγη δὲ ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν*.<sup>1</sup> The exaggerations of this idea in Neo-Platonic thought and Christian practice are well known, and naturally brought about a reaction. For the world after all is God's world, and He must be in it as well as above it. None the less the enlightened worshipper does not address himself to a Deity who has no being outside the world-process. For he feels that a God who is thus interwoven with this unsatisfying experience in sense and time cannot ensure the fulfilment of his deep desire for spiritual deliverance and personal completion. It would thus appear that religious experience and speculative thought converge towards a common conception of God. The metaphysical problem, as we tried to show, was how to think

<sup>1</sup> Theætetus, 176 B.

the World-Ground, so that, while all things depend upon it, the individuality which is at the core of experience may not be reduced to unreal appearance. The ripest outcome of religious experience, which is expressed in faith in a God who is in the world but also above it, agrees with the speculative conclusion, though the line of approach has been different. That is to say, the demands of consistent theory and the needs of the spiritual life lead toward the same result.

Any speculative interpretation of religion must ultimately be determined by the idea of God. If, for instance, God is concluded to be impersonal, it would not be possible to regard the end of religion as the completion and harmony of human personality. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that the basis from which a Philosophy of Religion is developed will be carefully and critically examined. I do not doubt that some will find the speculative idea of God, suggested in the present paper, to be inconsistent, or at least defective. In any case it will be said that it raises perplexing questions which it does not answer. The latter complaint, it must be granted, has justification. Difficulties, for example, are connected with the interpretation of the nature of space and time, and with the manner of the divine immanence in the world. On the other hand, it may be replied that there is no meta-

physical theory of reality which does not lay itself open to objections more or less important. The test applied to a theory of the kind must be a modified one—viz., how far it does justice to the essential aspects of experience. And I will say this, the conception of God as personal World-Ground offers fewer and less serious difficulties than that which regards Him as an impersonal Absolute. Thus, if the non-personal nature of God be maintained, not only does the evolution of the human self become an enigma, but the historic development of the religious consciousness can only mean the fictitious projection into the sphere of real being of purely subjective needs and desires. It has been truly said, "If it be denied that the concept of personality is applicable to the nature of God, the whole historical development of the religious consciousness must be termed the development of an illusion."<sup>1</sup> And while some are prepared frankly to accept this consequence, they must do so at the cost of declaring the fundamental and persistent need in human nature, which engendered the illusion, to be false and misleading. This would mean that there is an abiding discord between the claims of the spiritual and intellectual nature. As against this we cherish the conviction, that a world in which spiritual life can realise itself,

<sup>1</sup> Siebeck, *Lehrbuch der Religionsphilosophie*, p. 364.

and advance progressively to higher forms, must be a world, on the whole at least, in accord with spiritual ends. From this we would infer that it has a spiritual ground. And if the theistic inference be wrong, we can have no confidence in the continued growth and dominance of spiritual life in the world. It has blossomed forth in the process of experience, and it may fade and die, for there is nothing in the nature of things which can secure its persistence. This can only be assured by an ethical and personal World-Ground.

The individual who strives to know the reasons of things is driven to confess that there are heights and depths in experience which baffle the philosophic mind. Even in the matter of our personal history, the inner fulness of experience and its subtle transitions are more than we can adequately express in the general ideas with which thought works. Still more inadequate must be our intellectual conception of that ideal experience,—the experience complete and harmonious in which personal beings come to spiritual fruition in union with God and one another,—which is the goal of religious endeavour. Dante, when at the close of his arduous journey he approached the sphere of the Eternal Light, found his speech brief and stammering, and strength failed him to pursue the lofty vision :—

“All’alta fantasia qui mancò possa.”

And of God as He is for Himself, of the depths of His inner nature, human thought could only speak surely if it had ceased to be human, and if it had become God's own thought. It is faith which completes the work which reason has to leave unfinished, and sets before men the Deity who can be an object of reverence, loyalty, and love. Faith gives that fulness of spiritual content to the idea of God without which the religion of personal experience and communion would be impossible. The office of faith thought cannot take upon itself, and a speculative theory of religion can lay no claim to exhaust the meaning of the object of faith. But it should not be deemed to have failed if it opens out deeper points of view on the subject, suggests the larger meaning of religious development, and throws a light on the place religion fills in experience as a whole.

The philosopher, according to the splendid idea of Plato, is a 'spectator of all time and existence': in truth, he is the son of his age, and utters his oracles on the deep things of eternity in the language and tones of his time. The activity of thought arises out of the wider movement of life, and has its roots therein. Behind it work the practical interests of a social era, and the verdicts of reason are not absolutely impartial and impersonal. The later speculator has the ampler ex-

perience to draw upon, if he has the wisdom to read its lesson; and he commonly finds it necessary to preface his own message by a statement of the shortcomings of those who have gone before him. Human experience is incomplete, and while it continues to widen and deepen, the task of philosophy will not be ended. Moreover, he would be a rash man who ventured to declare that the universe contains no other evolution of experience than the terrestrial. Religion in these days has been reproached for failing to take to heart the teaching of Copernicus, but philosophy has often laid itself open to the same censure. And if Philosophy, depending as it does on the larger movement of experience, can advance no claim to finality, the Philosophy of Religion is of necessity in the same case. To some extent its conclusions must be tentative, and there are things which it has to leave unexplained. But if we reject the gospel which some at present preach, that reason is only the slave of feeling or the hired servant of will; if we are satisfied that thought is an essential aspect of a developed personal life;—we shall recognise that man must take on him the task of searching out the deeper meaning of religious experience.



ESSAY VI.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY: THE  
RITSCHLIAN STANDPOINT



## ESSAY VI.

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THE word theology (*θεολογική*) was used by Aristotle as a designation of First Philosophy. For his exposition of principles led up to a Supreme Principle, to a Being who is the ground of all being. Following this lead, and keeping to the meaning of the term, we should regard theology as dealing only with the nature and attributes of God. In practice, however, the word theology has come to have a wider meaning. It is used to denote the connected presentation of a system of religious doctrine. And such a system is based on a concrete historic religion.

The formation of doctrine belongs to the later period of religious growth, for in the early stages of religion the intellectual element is little developed. Custom, worship, and ritual precede the evolution of doctrine. Among the nature-religions doctrine, in the ordinary sense, is not explicit, and remains unseparated from myth, ritual, and tradition. Nor

is this further development possible before the appearance of ethical religion, and the advent of reflective self-consciousness. But when this point is reached, thought asserts for itself a distinct function in interpreting and directing the expression of the religious spirit. The beliefs which have silently grown up are now defined and organised, and appeal is made to the understanding as well as to the feelings and will. Man desires to find a general meaning for the acts which are the practical expression of religion, and this meaning he seeks to formulate in doctrine. Illustrations of this tendency will be readily found in the religions of India and of ancient Egypt. But beyond all doubt the Christian Religion furnishes the best example of the growth of an elaborate doctrinal system. And it is the only system which has a direct and living interest for Western peoples. In the present paper theology is used exclusively in its Christian reference.

Like every other religion, Christianity did not establish itself, in the first instance, on a doctrinal foundation. Beliefs there were, of course, but they were relatively few and simple, and faith was intimately united to life. But as the spiritual movement grew and gathered strength, as it passed beyond the limits of the Jewish people and appealed to Gentiles reared under alien traditions and ideas,

it became necessary for the Church consciously to realise and to put in intelligible form the outlines of her teaching. And the task was the more urgent from the fact that Christianity from a very early period had to meet distortions and perversions of what was felt to be true belief. The presence and the oppositions of *heresies* forced the Church to draw out with increasing fulness the details of the orthodox creed. And by the end of the second century the phrase *τὸ δόγμα* became current as the sign of a doctrine accepted by the Church. The dogma was regarded as the intelligible formulation of a truth implied in the common Christian consciousness. And with the multiplication of doctrinal principles, it became necessary to connect and organise them in a systematic way.

The important part played by Hellenism in the development of the Church's theology has been widely recognised. The formal terms in which the early theologians expressed their doctrines were borrowed from Greek thought, through the medium of Hellenism, and the form could not but react upon the matter. And in the Greek language the thinkers of the Church had an instrument to express the subtle distinctions they desired to draw. But over and above this, we find philosophy affecting theology in a more direct way in the work of the Alexandrine School. In the first and second

centuries the pseudo-philosophy of the Gnostics had offered itself as a larger and more profound interpretation of Christianity. But though the fantastic constructions of Gnosticism were rejected, some at least were disposed to admit that its general principle was right. There was a higher wisdom to which the philosopher could attain. This *γνώσις* was a *πίστις ἐπιστημονική*—faith elevated by knowledge—so said Clement of Alexandria. The philosopher, in this view, was able to grasp by thought the meaning of the dogma which the common Christian consciousness held by faith. Between knowledge and faith there was no antagonism. The influence of speculative thought on the Church's theology is still more apparent in Clement's great pupil Origen. Some of Origen's theories, like that of the eternal generation of the Son, the Church accepted as true; others, like that of the eternal creation of the world, she rejected as false. But it is clear that while the Church, through her councils, claimed to be the judge of what was Catholic truth, she was not disposed to refuse the aid of the philosopher in helping her to a more profound interpretation of Christian doctrine.

When we pass to mediæval times, we find the religious atmosphere and outlook changed. The formative period has passed, dogma has

hardened down into fixed form, and the work of the theologian is to systematise. The fundamental assumption of Scholasticism is the truth of the dogma: reason may support the dogma, but cannot alter it. One thinker in the ninth century, Scotus Erigena, had shown a speculative boldness which recalls Origen, but it was at the expense of being considered heretical.<sup>1</sup> And in the eleventh century Anselm's words, "credo ut intelligam," set forth the spirit of the movement. Reason is to be valued as the *ancilla fidei*, but it must not alter or criticise the faith. Nevertheless, if the Church's theology could be buttressed and confirmed by the Aristotelian Philosophy, this was tacitly to admit the independent authority, and in a sense the superiority, of the philosophic reason to the dogma. Philosophy, ostensibly the handmaid of theology, was in a way to become the mistress. And though this drastic change was not accomplished by Scholasticism, yet reason became a disintegrating influence on the structure of mediæval theology. This appears in the theory of the "double truth" held by Occam and the later schoolmen. What was true in philosophy might be false in theology, and what was true

<sup>1</sup> In one place, speaking of God, Erigena says, "Deus propter eminentiam non immerito nihil vocatur." One does not wonder that his orthodoxy was doubted.

in theology might be false in philosophy. Such a position, from the intellectual point of view, was virtually suicidal: and if those who adopted it found it convenient, it is not likely that many of them took it seriously. The inevitable result was the abandonment of the assumption on which Scholastic theology rested; and the birth of the Reformation signalised the open revolt of reason against the dogmatic system of the mediæval Church.

The theology of the Reformed Churches was not reared by the help of speculative thought. It represented in the main an endeavour to cut away what was judged to be false in Romish doctrine, and to build up a system of theology on biblical lines. Nor was philosophy itself in a condition to aid in the work of reconstruction. Condemned for centuries to a merely formal activity, it had to come in contact with reality, to find content in the fresh movements of science and social life, ere it could rise to an effective development and make its voice heard in matters of faith.

There is one episode, however, in the space between the Reformation and the beginning of last century to which it may be instructive to refer. I mean the Deistic controversy and the discussions on "natural religion," which extended



from the middle of the seventeenth well into the eighteenth century. Here rational thought takes up a distinctive attitude to "revealed religion" as represented in the theology of the Church. That attitude was both positive and negative. Positive, in so far as the English rationalistic thinkers held that there was a core of truth beneath the doctrines of the Church; negative, in so far as they held that this truth was to be reached by an external process of cutting away the overgrown branches of the theological tree, and reducing it to the bare stem of rational religion—the religion endorsed by the natural light of reason in man. The idea of a simple, clear-cut, and universally intelligible 'religion of nature,' which is the norm of religious appreciation, is a curious evidence of the limitations of the eighteenth century mind. That mind, as we all know, was not historical. Reason to it meant the logical understanding, a ready-made instrument, not a developing capacity. It construed history by the light of fictions of its own creation. 'Natural religion' was an artificial product, just as were the 'state of nature' and 'natural rights.' Hence a sympathetic view of religious development, and of the growth of dogma as an aspect of that development, lay beyond the mental horizon of the eighteenth century thinkers. No fruitful

application of speculative ideas to the content of religion was possible. Even Kant, in so many ways the herald of a new age, was still largely influenced by the ideas of the past. His reflexions on the subject of religion were entitled "Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason," and in his general treatment of religion the influence of the eighteenth century is unmistakable.

This sober rationalism melted away in that wonderful spring-time of speculative ardour and religious interest which marked the early decades of the nineteenth century in Germany. The Romantic movement, headed by Schleiermacher, and the far-reaching systems of the Post-Kantian thinkers, were in different ways instrumental in bringing philosophic ideas into living contact with theological doctrines. The speculative keenness and confidence which were inspired by the 'kings of thought' bore fruit in numerous attempts to give a philosophical interpretation of the main dogmas of Christianity. Between 1830 and 1850 the German mind was extraordinarily active in the department of speculative theology, as any reader may satisfy himself who consults a good history of the movement.<sup>1</sup>

In the first essay I have indicated the general standpoint of those who sought to recast and re-

<sup>1</sup> *Vid.* Pfleiderer, *The Development of Theology.*

interpret religious doctrine on Hegelian principles. The old contrast of *πίστις* and *γνώσις* had a counterpart in the distinction of *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*. But the speculative theologian claimed the right to criticise, reject, or transform religious dogma by reference to the philosophical idea of religion. That there was, after all, a certain indefiniteness in this idea, was apparent from the very different valuations put on the doctrines of the Church by those who professed to share the same philosophic principles. The doctrine which one thinker reduced to a myth another thought worthy of a speculative interpretation<sup>1</sup>. With the decadence of faith in the principles which the speculative theologians sought to apply to religious doctrines their work gradually fell into disrepute. The mind of the theologian, it was urged, must not be warped by preconceived ideas. He must bring an open mind to the study of Christian development, and he must recognise that feeling and will play a larger part than thought in religious evolution. The growth of Christian doctrine, for example, is not to be reduced to a progress through antagonism of ideas as it seemed to the Tübingen School, but should be connected with the practical needs, interests, and aspirations

<sup>1</sup> Daub, for instance, speculatively constructs the person of the Devil. To theologians of the type of Strauss this was folly.

which entered into the life of the Church. We ought to stand close to the historic facts in the fulness of their meaning. And a doctrine has meant more for the religious mind than can be represented in general notions.

It will not now be denied that there is truth in these contentions. To some this truth has seemed so all-important that they declare that, in its basis and methods, theology must be purely historical. In Germany, once its home, speculative theology to-day receives no courteous treatment at the hands of theologians; and for a generation their attitude to it has been in the main hostile. I have already referred to the leading part played in the reactionary movement by the large and influential Ritschlian School.<sup>1</sup> A year or two ago Harnack, in the introduction to those eloquent and illuminating lectures which he delivered to the Berlin students on "What is Christianity?" remarked, "Had we held these lectures sixty years ago, we should have occupied ourselves in trying to find a general idea of religion by speculation, and in determining the Christian (idea) in accordance with it. Only we have justly grown sceptical about this procedure. *Latet dolus in generalibus*. We know to-day that life does not admit of being compassed by universal notions."<sup>2</sup> And these words of the distinguished historian of

<sup>1</sup> See Essay I.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, pp. 5, 6.

dogma express the mind of that numerous group of theologians who treat religious problems after the method and in the spirit of Ritschl. The followers of Ritschl differ among themselves in their epistemology, and in the value they attach to particular dogmas and religious movements, but they are all at one with the master in maintaining that metaphysics cannot help theology, and must be sternly excluded from it. *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis!*

Some fifteen or twenty years ago the Ritschlian theology was little known in this country. And such verdicts as were passed on it were, in the main, unfavourable. But now signs of a change of attitude are not wanting. The monistic idealism which traced its inspiration to Kant and Hegel does not command the same assent: and a philosophic movement which tends to subordinate thought to will, the theoretical to the personal and practical aspect of life, has made its appearance. As yet the partisans of the movement are chiefly engaged in clearing the ground for themselves by a vigorous assault on the philosophic powers that be. The elements of value in their gospel will be better judged when they have constructively developed their principles. Meanwhile the sympathetic hearing accorded to the new views is a sign that older forms of speculation are ceasing to satisfy. And it

may be supposed that this change in the philosophic temper of our time will help in disposing the theologically-minded to give a favourable reception to the Ritschlian system. Indeed there are signs that this is already the case. Where not so long ago Ritschlianism would have been condemned for its lack of philosophic basis, it now receives attentive and appreciative study. That this theology, laying stress as it does exactly on those points where speculative idealism was weak, has a function to fulfil in the development of religious thought I do not doubt. But there are good reasons why the Ritschlian standpoint should not be accepted as a whole. I must, however, limit as far as possible the discussion to a single, if prominent, aspect of the system. We are at present concerned with the question, whether Ritschl and his followers successfully justify the exclusion of philosophy from theology. When we have sufficiently considered this point, we will state our own view on the relation of the one to the other.

According to Ritschl the fundamental fact for Christian theology is the revelation of God in Christ.<sup>1</sup> This is the basis of the Kingdom of God,

<sup>1</sup> In this examination of Ritschlianism I have used at one or two points an article of my own, published a good many years ago in the American 'Presbyterian Review.' English readers will find a clear and fair-minded statement of Ritschl's system in Dr Garvie's book, 'The Ritschlian Theology.' Instructive criticisms are con-

the spiritual society founded by Christ, in which man realises his freedom and works out his religious vocation. The idea of the kingdom of God, as the highest good of Christian men, is the central idea in the light of which Ritschl constructs his doctrinal system. Hence for him a particular historical manifestation guides and controls the working out of Christian Dogmatics. The Christian consciousness, which expresses itself in value-judgments, affirms the Kingdom of God to be the supreme good. And it is by judgments of value in relation to the Kingdom that the attributes of God, the person and work of Christ, and the practical religious life are determined for the Christian consciousness. Putting it generally, we may say that the Christian consciousness, from the content of which Christian doctrine is evolved, has an objective and a subjective side. The former is the fact of revelation, the latter is the judgment by which faith affirms the value of that revelation for the inner life. Through these two factors, then, we are supplied with the materials for constructing a theology positive and historical, which is without any admixture of the baser ele-

tained in the English translation of Prof. Pfleiderer's 'Philosophy of Religion' and in his 'Development of Theology.' In his 'Unterricht in der christlichen Religion,' Ritschl has given a clear and useful outline of his theology. The full exposition of his system is contained in his great work in three volumes, 'Die christliche Lehre der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung.'

ment of metaphysics. And so to theologians, to quote the words of Herrmann, "Whether philosophy be deistic, pantheistic, theistic, or whatever it is, is a matter of indifference."<sup>1</sup>

It is of course inevitable that a theology, which is built up by personal value-judgments operating on the historic fact of the Christian Revelation, should at many points be antagonistic to ecclesiastical dogma. Ritschl and his followers are at no pains to conceal this antagonism. For the dogmatic system of the Churches has been leavened by metaphysical thought, due largely to Greek influence, and is therefore no satisfactory statement of objective Christian Revelation. Hence, in their reconstruction of Christian doctrine, the Ritschlians eliminate the metaphysical element and replace it by the practical aspect. Instead of the ecclesiastical doctrines of the Trinity, the metaphysical attributes of God, the transcendent nature of Christ, they substitute such practical interpretations of these as are made possible by bringing them into organic relation with Christ's Kingdom as the supreme end. The eternal and divine nature of Christ, for instance, simply means that He had an eternal place in the divine world-plan which embraced the kingdom, and that his person has the religious value of God for the Christian community.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Pfleiderer, *Phil. of Religion* (Eng. trans.), vol. ii. p. 100.



An exposition or a criticism of the Ritschlian theology is not our task at present. But one may express appreciation of its boldness and decision of purpose. Ritschl was always resolved to call his soul his own; and antagonism to movements he disliked exercised a considerable influence in fixing his own standpoint. One can also admire the persistency with which certain fundamental principles are kept in sight in the system, and the unity of spirit and method which characterises it. Nor is it a slight merit that the School should lift up its voice with courage and conviction against the dead weight of ecclesiastical dogma, and demand a return to what is practical and historical. For those at all events who are unfettered by tradition, and can read the signs of the times, recognise that reconstruction is inevitable, if the study of theology is to be pursued with more than an antiquarian interest. Last, but not least, Ritschlians have done a real service in insisting on the indispensable office of the value-judgment in the religious consciousness. The tendency of speculative theologians had been to ignore this, and to the disadvantage of their work.

We have still to ask, however, if Ritschl and his followers are really successful in eliminating metaphysics from theology, and in showing that the latter can be quite independent of the former.

The reply to this question must be in the negative. Indeed Ritschl's contemporary, Lipsius, said no more than the truth when he declared that Ritschl's rejection of philosophical principles was ostensible rather than real.<sup>1</sup> It may conduce to clearness if I state, under separate heads, what seem to me the main objections to the Ritschlian position on this point.

I. The rejection of metaphysics by the Ritschlian school is not thorough, although it claims to be so. Even those who deeply distrust metaphysics have usually some metaphysical presuppositions on which they take stand in delivering their attack upon it. Ritschl himself develops an epistemological theory with the aid of Kant and Lotze, which forms the introduction to his theology. As the result of this he is able to define the sphere and function of the theoretical and of the value-judgment, and to determine the limitations of the former. By its own means, he tells us, theoretical knowledge cannot at all attain to a highest universal law of existence. The idea of the world as a totality is not due to philosophy but to the religious consciousness. Yet finally Ritschl is led to conclude that, if we set out from the Christian idea of God, a theoretical knowledge of the world as a totality is still possible. "If theoretical knowledge will not re-

<sup>1</sup> *Glauben und Wissen*, p. 324.

nounce the attempt to comprehend the co-ordination of nature and spiritual life, it must accept the Christian idea of God as scientifically valid truth." One might argue against this statement that the idea of the world-unity is implied in the exercise of reason, and is not a pure gift of revealed religion. But apart from this the passage quoted shows that Ritschl was in the end disposed to grant, albeit in a half-hearted way, a liberty of philosophising under certain conditions. The incomplete exclusion of philosophy from theology is further shown in the Ritschlian treatment of the idea of God. The idea is supposed to be entirely given through the value-judgment in which the religious consciousness expresses itself. If so, it cannot contain elements which fall outside personal experience. That Ritschl really includes such elements in his exposition of the divine Idea can hardly be doubted. In point of fact, he tries to formulate in general terms the conditions which produce in man the conception of God. His theory is related to the Kantian. "The idea of God in religious knowledge is attached to the condition that man sets himself over against the world, and makes his position in it, or over it, sure through trust in God."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the

<sup>1</sup> *Lehre der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, iii. 204. The theory of the genesis of the idea of God as a *Hilfsvorstellung*, or helping-con-

idea of God helps man over the opposition between his spiritual consciousness and his natural limitations, and assures to him his freedom. Now the value-judgment which gives us the idea of God cannot also give us the universal conditions which make itself possible. These can only be stated as the result of theoretical reflexion which goes beyond what is given in particular experience. Ritschl's epistemology of the religious consciousness, whatever we may think of it, is a theory elaborated by reflective thought, which states in general terms the meaning of the object of faith. It cannot be said that this is presented or directly involved in Christian experience. Again, in exhibiting the Christian idea of God, as given in revelation and verified by the value-judgment, it is hard to maintain that Ritschl keeps within the limits laid down. The thought of the time at least exerts a regulative influence upon him. And his views of the eternity, unity, and the omnipresence of God can scarcely be traced to the value-judgments of Christian experience.

II. Ritschl's theology claims to be non-speculative because it pretends to be purely historical. It rests on a historic revelation. And I would urge that

ception, is a weak point in the Ritschlian system, and stands in the way of the full recognition of the truth, that God is directly related to the spiritual life of the individual and completes it.

the narrow Ritschlian conception of revelation is not tenable. For, be it remembered, it is denied that philosophic thought, by the examination of general experience, can show that such a revelation is even possible. Christianity, according to Ritschl, stands in no vital relation to other religions, nor will he allow that there is any universal consciousness of God. Hence there is no proper sphere for a philosophy of religion, which seeks to arrive at the essential meaning of religion, through the reflective study of its history. But this emphasis on an objective revelation, single and unique, carries with it serious difficulties. By divorcing Christianity from the general development of religion its appearance becomes a mystery, which is in no way lessened by insisting that it is a fact. For a fact loses meaning in isolation. And if revelation, as Ritschl conceives it, did take place and diffused itself among men, it would still imply a capacity to receive it: this argues a common relation to God, not created by revelation, but involved in the nature of the human spirit itself. If there were not a common though undeveloped consciousness of God involved in the nature of mind, what could revelation appeal to? The inherent difficulty of a pure religious empiricism, which will not allow even a regulative function to philosophic thought, becomes clearer when we ask how the definite

content of revelation is to be determined. No one will contend that the content of revealed truth will be immediately certain to any one who examines the Christian canonical writings. Ritschl himself used considerable freedom in dealing with them. This is still more marked in the case of his distinguished follower Harnack, who frankly admits that there is a good deal in New-Testament literature which will not satisfy the demands of modern criticism. In his lecture on "Christianity and History," he labours to show that, behind these accretions, there is a core which constitutes the objective fact of revelation.<sup>1</sup> And he says that this fact is certified by the effect it produces. Yet if the essence of Christianity were generally apparent through its effects, would there have been so much dispute about what the essence was? Mere experience will not define the content of revelation, if the experience of one man does not coincide with that of another. Nor is it possible to separate out of the historic development of Christian experience certain elements which have remained fixed and constant in their significance throughout. Indeed, Ritschlians bring with them to the selection and valuation of historic materials an idea of true religion which is not impressed on them from

<sup>1</sup> The lecture is now included in the 2nd volume of his 'Reden und Aufsätze.'

without. It really, as we think, presupposes theoretical reflexion on their part, and it involves them in the rejection of not a little which others claim to belong to the content of revealed religion. In the light of the ideal of what constitutes revelation—an ideal which is no pure deduction from history—the theologians of the School regard the later dogmatic developments of the Church very unfavourably. They see there an object-lesson of the fatal results which follow the union of metaphysics with theology. Yet the germs of these metaphysical developments may be found in the Pauline and Johannine literature. And those whose standpoint is severely historical can hardly prove that these germs represent the intrusion of an alien element into the body of the Christian faith. Put briefly, our point is that Ritschlians, who are constantly able to distinguish pure Christianity from its false accretions, are going on a standard of valuation which has been elaborated by thought out of experience, and is not immediately given in experience. In short, though the claim to build a theology on a purely historic basis is plausible, and appeals to those who desire to have done with subjective opinion and prejudice and to rest on the firm ground of fact, the principle cannot be consistently worked out in practice. Reason, we are told, must bow in silence before fact. But we are

not so much impressed by the dictum, when we find that reason has asserted itself in determining what is fact.

III. The conviction that thought exercises no constitutive function in religion led Ritschl to maintain that this constitutive office is entirely fulfilled by the value-judgments. In this he has been generally, if not universally, followed by the theologians of the School.<sup>1</sup> This exaltation of the value-judgment is the outcome of a psychology which acknowledges the primacy and dominance of will in the personal life. In the case of the Ritschlian movement this feature has a connexion with the stress laid on the practical reason by Kant. Now, that judgments of value play an important part in religion has been fully admitted. But the point is whether theology, as a science, can be reared on this basis. For the characteristic of the value-judgment is, that it only defines the object in so far as it affects the subject. And theology must therefore be restricted to dealing with the objects of faith only as they reveal them-

<sup>1</sup> Kaftan, I understand, holds that the theoretical judgment may play a part in religion on the basis given by the value-judgment. It would be an exaggeration to say that Ritschlians believe that what is true for the one form of judgment may be false for the other. But the dualism between them is left standing, and no effort after unification is made. One would at least desire the recognition of unity as an ideal we must strive after.



selves, or enter into the experience of persons. That Ritschl succeeded in keeping his theology within the limits thus laid down, we have already seen reason to doubt. A still more serious difficulty is the element of subjectivity which will cling to theological propositions, whose *only* guarantee is judgments of value. For there is nothing in the mere experience of value which invests the experience with any element of necessity, or lays us under the obligation of believing that our experience must be that of other people. Nor does revelation, conceived as an objective fact, offer a means by which we can free ourselves from this difficulty. For the only mode of determining and appreciating revelation is subjective—*i.e.*, the way it affects us.

No doubt it would be unfair to suggest that the value-judgments of religion are merely the isolated, and it may be inconsistent, utterances of individuals. They have a certain unity of ground. Christian experience expresses itself through individuals, who are spiritually what they are in and through their membership in a living Christian community. In this way it might seem we have a normative body of value-judgments, on which a theological system may be developed. This argument is not without weight. There is a sense in which those who are living the life together know the truth of the

doctrine. But none the less an empirical generalisation will not guarantee its own objective validity. And it seems to me we can only find security for the objective reference of the value-judgments of Christian experience if we take them in connexion with, and make them supplement and complete, the objective determinations of reason. For then our judgments of value, which represent the demands of the inner life, give spiritual content to the more formal but objective determination of the Divine Being by thought. If we follow Ritschl, however, and deny that thought is a constitutive element of religion, even the appeal to that general Christian experience which is based on revelation will not help us beyond the subjective standpoint to the firm ground of the objective and universal. For all we have to go on is the fact of this experience : we cannot say *why* this experience should be, and that it is the expression of universal principles. Accordingly the experience of the Christian Church can only be authoritative to the individual, in so far as he shares it, and can verify it in his own personal judgments of value. And at the most he can only have a limited empirical assurance that his own valuations hold good for other persons. We have certainly no right to say that they must do so, if we are true to Ritschlian principles.

Indeed, I believe Ritschlians regard the valua-

tions of the Christian consciousness as more consistent and coherent than they really are. It would not be difficult to show that the values on which the Christian mind of one age laid stress did not fill the same place in another age. Christians of the fourth century were no doubt persuaded that a metaphysical theology was involved in the needs of a spiritual life. Many of their descendants in these days do not find that this theology stands in a vital relation to practical religion. Again, the Catholic of the middle age judged an authoritative Church to be of high value in supplying his spiritual wants: the Protestant, on the other hand, accentuated the worth of personal faith. In truth, the broad ethical conceptions of value developed by Christian experience may be used as indicating what the spiritual consciousness postulates in the object of its faith. But it is a very different thing to make them the exclusive basis of theological construction. Value-judgments do not fulfil the conditions of the old canon of Catholicity, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*" And the theologian has to go beyond the narrow and uncertain basis they supply. This is still more evident if we consider, as I think we must do, the Christian consciousness in relation to the general religious consciousness of mankind. For then the differences in valuation are much greater. Yet if we refuse to do this how can we

justify the claim of Christianity to be a universal religion? How can we assert that in principle it is the highest and fullest expression of that relation of sonship in which all men stand to God?

If the foregoing arguments are well-founded, Ritschlianism has not proved that theology can successfully dispense with metaphysics. But though this be granted, it may still be contended that theology cannot afford to be allied with, or to be dependent on, secular philosophy. Christian revelation, it is urged, is a fact of supreme importance, and it must decisively determine our views of the world and man. Therefore theology must develop its own metaphysics, for metaphysics in independence cannot by any means yield results of the same value.<sup>1</sup>

This standpoint is of the nature of a compromise. It commends itself to those who recognise the difficulty of banishing all speculative reflexion from theology, and who nevertheless distrust the capacity of any philosophy to deal with religious problems if it does not rest on certain Christian presuppositions. That the advocates of this view have something to say on their side is probably true. Christian experience is an important fact, and philosophy

<sup>1</sup> This view, for instance, is put forward by Dr Garvie, *vid.* 'The Ritschlian Theology,' pp. 68, 69, 392, 393. And it was at least suggested by Ritschl himself, if never definitely set forth.

must take it into account in forming its conception of the world as a whole. The demands of the higher spiritual nature enter into the meaning of the world which thought seeks to explain. For the rest, the idea of a separate and independent Christian metaphysics seems to us wrong in conception and unworkable in practice. It cannot, of course, be contended that there is any dualism in reason: the thinking process of the Christian metaphysician is the same as that of the ordinary metaphysician. The difference between them is, that the latter reaches his principles from the study of general experience, the former evolves them from a particular experience. And in the second place, Christian metaphysics so conceived takes certain historic facts as normative in forming its theory.

Such a Christian philosophy would claim to be generally valid. In which case its postulates would require to commend themselves to reason as worthy of general acceptance. Now in a case where postulates imply an interpretation of history—an interpretation presenting peculiar difficulties and involving in the end a demand on faith—it would be too much to expect agreement. Even those who speak from within the Church would not be at one about the basis, which the Christian faith offers to speculative thought for development. But suppose we waive this objection. Grant that Christian meta-

physics is in a position to develop its theory. Then it may either create or borrow the general notions which it employs. If the former, it could only justify their extension to the wider realm of experience by examining and criticising them in relation to experience, and this in the spirit of metaphysics in its wider sense. And the process could not be carried out unless the original postulates were reconsidered and tested in the light of general experience. If the latter, then in accepting from philosophy conceptions such as cause, substance, and end, as valid in experience, it has ceased in any strict sense to be independent.

Moreover, in regard to its method we must criticise adversely this idea of a Christian metaphysics. It takes the Christian consciousness by itself, and on this basis proposes to develop its speculative theory. But Christianity would have been historically unintelligible, if it had been without organic relation to the prior development of the religious consciousness. And no theory which treats it in isolation can do justice to its contents. A Christian metaphysics, from the nature of its object-matter, must begin by broadening out into a philosophy of religion. Finally, I would urge that no metaphysics can give a satisfactory theory of reality by interpreting all experience through one of its phases. Religion itself is only one aspect of experience.

And however philosophy may come short in its task, it has to think things together and as elements in a whole. For it is catholic in its outlook, and tries to do justice to all the aspects of the complex experience with which it deals. This impartial and objective treatment is a condition of its success, because our insight into the meaning of the whole depends on the degree in which we have been able to perceive the connexion of the parts and their mutual interdependence. It might be argued that a Christian metaphysics is also in a position to think things together. This is true to the extent that it tries to show how the whole is related to one of the parts. But it interprets the significance of the part in isolation to begin with, and so cannot guarantee the validity of its principles for experience as a whole. I fear, too, that the record of history does not encourage us to expect that this kind of religious metaphysics would be convincing in its treatment of speculative problems. And it would only gain in strength and in breadth of appeal by ceasing to be, what it set out by claiming to be, independent of the general speculative thought of the age.

If, then, theology is not able to create its own metaphysics, and if we cannot keep theology rigidly apart from philosophy, we must ask finally if the two may not fruitfully and helpfully be connected

with one another. I venture to offer a few remarks on the point, which, to some extent perhaps, may suggest an answer to the question.

Theology on any view is not a purely speculative science. It has practical ends to serve—the instruction of a Christian community—and these it must keep before it. It builds on the basis of Christian experience, as contained in biblical literature and the tradition of the Church, and it has to formulate doctrines from this experience, and to present them in forms which will edify the existing Christian consciousness. Therefore theology is, in the first instance, a historical science, for it develops its doctrines out of what has been historically experienced. The theologian makes certain presuppositions on historical grounds, and he does not arrive at his first principles by purely critical reflection. Nor is this to be objected to in the circumstances. Theology is not philosophy, and does not pretend to be so. But the articulation and development of a system of doctrine is the work of thought, and in the statement of its results theology inevitably puts forward a general view of the world. In giving determinate expression to this view the earlier theologians made themselves debtors to the speculative heritage of the past, and used it where they consistently could. Nevertheless the theological *Weltanschauung* has



commonly presented sharp points of contrast to the philosophical; and this might be expected from the fact that the former sets out from particular, the latter from universal, experience.

Now it is just in forming this general view of things that the need of co-operation between philosophy and theology is evident. As a result of the growth of science and the activity of philosophic thought, new conceptions of the world have been formed and exist alongside those which the traditional theology presents to us. And where there is opposition and contradiction between them, reconciliation is called for. Both cannot be right, and reason demands consistency. Theology can only be indifferent to this demand at the expense of losing its interest and vitality for the present age: decadence is always the consequence of isolation. In so far, then, as theology finds it necessary to put forward a theoretical view of the world which is in harmony with the knowledge of the age, it must have the co-operation of philosophy. The fear about the intrusion of a foreign and hostile influence into theology under these conditions argues a strange distrust of human nature. For reason is one and the same, whether it is exercised in the sphere of theology or metaphysics; and its effort, whatever be the object, is to think out the meaning of the object

coherently. And as theology cannot exclude reason, it must accept the task which reason imposes, and strive after a view of things into which the existing body of knowledge may enter consistently.

In following out this, the theoretical aspect of its mission, theology passes gradually into the philosophy of religion. And Christian Dogmatics has been treated by some in the spirit of a religious philosophy. But though there is a real contact between the two, it is not desirable that theology should be identified with a philosophy of religion. The former has a practical aspect, which the latter has not. Then the object-matter of the philosophy of religion is the religious consciousness as a whole: it sets out to investigate this. But theology begins by taking as its object-matter the Christian consciousness and the historical experience out of which it has grown. No doubt the Christian consciousness is not to be isolated from the general religious consciousness; but we must remember that the former has a special value on which the theologian lays stress. He holds that the experience, which is the basis of his doctrine, has an authority that does not belong, in the same degree at least, to other manifestations of the religious consciousness. And this fact has important bearings. Human knowledge is partial,

and faith has a real part to play in life. If the speculative reason could give us a complete and convincing interpretation of the universe, it might be urged that theology only states, in a figurative form, ideas which are presented in their true form in the system of philosophy. But if we renounce, as we must do, any claim to complete and absolute knowledge, then a theology, so far as it succeeds in presenting in general and connected fashion the truths involved in a divinely-wrought experience, has a special significance and value.

But the point we wish to press is that spiritual experience is not to be severely separated from general experience. Those who insist on doing this appear to forget that the value they claim for spiritual experience implies a contrasted aspect of experience which makes the valuation possible. And if theology, as the science of Christian experience, enters into relation with philosophy, as the science of general experience, it is only following out a connexion implied in its own existence. Such a relation, if cultivated in the right spirit by both sides, will be helpful. For neither in theology any more than in philosophy do we have a pure and final system of truth. Both are capable of development, and live only as they develop. Now though the unification attempted by specula-

tive science is provisional only, yet there are advantages in considering religious doctrines in relation to it. This lets us see in what degree our theology coheres with experience, in so far as we are able to think it as a consistent whole. Philosophy, be it remembered, is in no position to discredit the value of Christian experience. But it is in a position to affect theology in its theoretical aspect. For it will set problems to the theologian, and indicate the line of advance. He will be led to recognise the points where doctrine must be recast and developed, and so brought into organic relation with the growing whole of knowledge.

For these reasons I venture to doubt that the Ritschlian standpoint will, in the long run, be found to subserve the best interests of theological science. The gospel of the limitation of knowledge is a wholesome doctrine, but speculative agnosticism is a dangerous kind of error. When faith can give no reason for itself, and is constrained to appeal simply to feeling, it is only another step to the conclusion that religion is nothing but the shadowy projection of human hopes and fears. And then theology, once named the queen of the sciences, becomes a futile endeavour to give form and body to a baseless vision of our own creation.

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